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01 // Fall 2020

Mouth of The River
Publication of Oyster River High School



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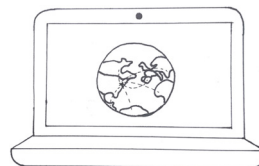
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Dear Reader,

We are so excited to be sharing our first issue of *Mouth of the River* for the 2020/2021 school year with you, and hope this finds you well. This issue is packed with fun and engaging stories for you: the Oyster River community. This is the first year a *Mouth of the River* staff has had to produce a print magazine virtually (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) and we are so proud of how everyone has handled this challenge with positivity, excitement, and perseverance. At the start of this year, whether or not we would produce a print issue was unknown. However, we decided as a staff that publishing a print edition was an important part in embodying the spirit of *Mouth of the River*, and we sincerely hope you all enjoy this issue.

Unfortunately, during the 2019/2020 school year, we were unable to publish our 3rd and 4th issues of the magazine due to the sudden shift to remote learning in March of 2019. All of the stories from last spring, along with all of our current and past stories, can be found on our website: mor.news. Make sure to also follow us on Instagram and Facebook to keep up with all things *MOR*.

Our cover story, "Quarantine Cuisine," written by Ella Gianino, captures the cooking and baking craze that has erupted over quarantine. The cover was created by Liam Ashburner and the staff's creative team, who captured one of the more light-hearted things to come out of this pandemic. Along with our cover story, there are multiple other stories that address the various impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are immensely proud of the wide range of stories that the staff covered, from profiles on ORHS staff members Marek Filip and Leslie Ayers, to more serious stories, including Oyster River's response to racism this fall.

We would like to thank our advisor Mr. Kelly and our staff for all of their hard work and dedication during these difficult times. We couldn't have done this without them.

A huge thank you to all of the businesses who have generously sponsored our publication this issue, which can all be found in the back of this magazine, and on our website under a dedicated sponsors tab. If you are interested in sponsoring *Mouth of the River* for the coming issues, or in subscribing to the publication, contact Ethan Wilson at mouthoftherivermagazine@gmail.com.

On behalf of the entire staff, thank you for reading, wherever you are, or whoever you are, and we hope you have fun reading our first issue of *Mouth of the River*.

Stay tuned,

Emily Hamilton and Holly Reid, Co-Editors in Chief

Meet the Staff

By Sadie Hackenburg & Photos By Liam Ashburner



Emily Hamilton ('21)

Emily is Editor in Chief this year after gaining experience as Content Manager last year. Emily's favorite thing about *MOR* is "being able to share stories to the community, instead of just having the teacher read it like most high school classes." Emily loves all types of music and her Spotify recap every year is very diverse. "It has everything from 60s/70s hippie music like the Beatles and Fleetwood Mac, to One Direction, to Kanye, to Glee." Emily loves music so much that she's been doing band for eight years. Emily is planning to major in biology and hopes to one day be a doctor.



Holly Reid ('21)

Holly is Editor in Chief this year. She was also on staff last year as the Op-Ed Editor. Holly enjoys being outdoors in general and some of her favorite activities are rowing and skiing. She is on the crew team and also skis competitively for the school. Holly's favorite part of *MOR* is "that we get to engage with the community in a unique way and write about things that we care about. The class environment is also super fun and positive, and unlike any other class I've been in." Holly's go-to song to listen to in the car depends on the day, but in general it's the song she hasn't overplayed the week before.



Chase Amarosa ('21)

Chase is a returning staff member this year, and is now utilizing the skills that he learned as Photo Editor last year in his new job as the team's Multimedia Editor. Chase loves photography in and out of class. He also enjoys skiing and surfing, and has recently developed a passion for collecting plants. He hopes to one day pursue a career that has something to do with sustainability. "Making sure the generations to follow are able to experience the world the way I have been able to is very important to me."



Ari Antonelli ('21)

Ari is the Content Manager on staff this year and last year was the staff's News Editor. "I want to major in journalism and the dream is to work on a magazine later in life, so the more time I work on journalism, the better. I just love talking to people about things they're passionate about," said Ari. Ari has also been an avid alpine skier since she was two. "I also love skiing in the woods, weaving in between trees, even if I've broken a couple bones from it." Her other hobbies include playing guitar and bass, skateboarding, and taking film photographs.



Liam Ashburner ('21)

Liam is the Photo Editor this year. Photography is one of Liam's main hobbies but he also enjoys hanging out with friends, watching Drag Race, and trying new foods. Liam has the right pair of sunglasses for any occasion and he uses the entire chapstick before losing it. Liam wanted to join the staff because "it provides an opportunity to use writing to make a change and bring awareness to things going on that affect everyone in the Oyster River community."



Bella Crocco ('21)

Bella returns this year to the staff, this time as the Features Editor, her job last year being Distribution Manager. "My favorite part about being on the staff of MOR is having the ability to reach a larger audience with my writing than I would on my own," said Bella. In her free time, Bella enjoys painting, playing guitar, making earrings, and spending time with friends. Her special talents include raising one eyebrow and singing. Her dream job changes almost daily, but currently it is to own her own art gallery.



Megan Deane ('21)

Megan is the News Editor on staff this year. She has a passion for journalism and has been showcasing her talents with her very own podcast "What in the world?" She is considering a career in journalism but is keeping her options open and is also considering things like political science or psychology. Her hero is Angela Davis because she is "kickass" and her ideal Sunday would be waking up early for a hike and then getting breakfast with friends.



Owen Fleischer ('21)

Owen is the Schedule Manager for the staff. Owen joined MOR because he likes to write journalistically and he has always enjoyed Mr. Kelly's classes. When asked about his dream job Owen said, "if climate change wasn't a pressing issue, and I didn't feel compelled to fix any shortcomings in our current society, I would not be employed and would roam the Earth seeking adventure." However, because climate change is a real issue, Owen is considering various jobs involving marine biology and can identify almost any fish from just a picture.



Ella Gianino ('21)

Ella is the Op-Ed Editor. Ella has been class president all four years of high school and is very passionate about politics. "Political activism is a priority for me, but I also like to bake, cook, and read." Her hero is Kamala Harris. Ella applied to *MOR* because, "I think it's a great Oyster River tradition, and I wanted to participate in sharing stories and information with the community, while amplifying students' voices."



Sadie Hackenburg ('21)

Sadie was the Layout Editor on staff last year and is this year's Creative Director. Sadie has played soccer all four years of high school, as well as doing track and unified basketball. She is also the senior class secretary and is a part of Robotics Club and Red Cross Club. Sadie decided to apply to *MOR* a second year because "not only did I enjoy the writing aspect of the class, but also all the behind the scenes work that went on in order to have an issue, like shooting the cover photos or doing the layout."



Foch Lovejoy ('21)

Foch is the Social Media Manager. He applied to *MOR* because, "I thought that it would be a fun and great experience being a part of a class that is primarily directed by the students. I think of myself as a strong writer and I liked the idea of writing for more than just a grade." Foch enjoys baseball, going to the gym, bridge jumping with friends, and playing video games. When asked if he had any secret talents, Foch said, "Reading minds. I can't do it with everyone and anytime but it typically surprises people when I do it."



Bhavana Muppala ('22)

Bhavana is this year's Layout Editor. "I absolutely loved Journalism 1...I could connect with the student body about important issues. And obviously, I want people to stay in the loop about what's happening in the community, so I felt *MOR* was the way to do that," said Bhavana. Outside of class, she does both indoor and outdoor track. She is also an active member of SALT and loves going on adventures in the great outdoors and trying new things. When she's older, Bhavana wants to travel all over the world and then become a psychiatrist.



Laura Slama ('22)

Laura is the Website Manager this year and applied because "I love to write and really wanted to share my perspective on issues and events with the community." She plays soccer year round and has been the goalie for the girls varsity team for two years now. Laura enjoys being outside, but prefers to be in warm places like Hawaii and Australia, where she hopes to move one day. She also is very skilled at word games. "I can beat anyone in games like Boggle or Scrabble."



Alden Swiesz ('21)

Alden has returned to staff and is the Sports and Culture Editor this year, his job last year being Schedule Manager. Alden is active in many sports and has been for all of high school. "I play baseball, hockey and soccer, all for the school's varsity teams. Hockey is my favorite, though, and the one that I want to pursue after high school," said Alden. Alden also enjoys playing piano and listening to music. He decided to return to staff this year because "I loved the fact that it felt less of a class and more like a big group project."



Madla Walsh ('21)

Madla joins the staff as Business Manager. "I really like writing... I also heard about it from all my friends and I wanted a chance to keep trying journalism because I think it's so fun," said Madla on why she joined. Along with writing, Madla enjoys photography, painting, and playing softball. Madla is also a vegetarian, she loves to travel, and an ideal morning would be "to not even see the morning and sleep in until noon, and then make myself a bagel, then probably reading or painting, something zen, before going out to hang out with my friends."



Ethan Wilson ('21)

Ethan joins the staff this year as Marketing Director. Ethan enjoys playing soccer, which he has played through the school since his freshman year. He is also on the ski team and enjoys surfing and spending time with friends. Ethan joined *MOR* because he "wanted to do something that actually makes an impact in the community and thought it would be a cool and fun class." His favorite part is that he can choose what to write about and research. When asked if he had any talents, Ethan said, "I can't snap," and his biggest pet peeve is loud typers.

Mouth of the River Mission Statement

Mouth of the River seeks to reliably inform the student body, as well as the surrounding community, of interesting and newsworthy content in a modern, compelling format. Our goal as a staff is to give voice to the students of Oyster River, and have it heard by all our students. The opinions expressed in Mouth of the River represent those of the writers and staff.

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• Email mouthoftherivermagazine@gmail.com •

The End of Snow Days?

Snow days are a staple of winter that many children look forward to each year. However, what snow days look like may change due the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ORCSD School Board has discussed the potential removal of snow days, which would be replaced by remote learning days. Because of the pandemic, teachers and students are now aware of how to successfully participate in school remotely. As of now, the option has not been formally presented to the school board, but has been mentioned in various meetings.

Most likely, if snow days go remote, improvisation and planning ahead from teachers would be necessary and something we see a lot more of. For example, if bad weather is in the forecast, a teacher may have to set up multiple plans based on if they would be in school to complete an activity, or not. However, there is optimism that teachers are now much more prepared to handle this situation. "Our teachers have received extensive training using technology in grades 5-12 to support instruction. I think it would be relatively easy for them," said ORCSD Superintendent Dr. James Morse.

Now that we are more prepared to handle this situation, a positive that will come out of this is that remote days would likely mean that we would not have to make up school days at the end of the year. This could make fewer students opposed to the idea. Andres Alcocer ('23) is somewhat in favor of the idea. He said, "I would probably be a little bit upset, but at the end of the school year we wouldn't have that extra make up day, which is nice."

Although students would benefit from this change at the end of the year, some do not care about that. For many, snow days are an exciting occasion, and nothing beats that feeling. "There's something special about snow days, and we can't take that away," said Owen Mueller ('21). When asked what made snow days special for him, Mueller said "waking up and playing video games with your friends on a snow day is something special." Mueller also noted that in the case of large storms, remote learning days could run into an issue. "Snow-storms can knock out powerlines and then kids wouldn't have WiFi, which could potentially be a problem."

As Mueller mentioned, power outages could be an issue for the school district trying to go remote for that day. Something else to consider is that power outages could occur at any point of the day, which could cause issues for many students and teachers.

Teachers feel that having to plan around this could potentially be an issue. If a remote day were to fall on the day of a

quiz, a lab, or a larger activity, that could potentially mess with a teacher's plan, and since these days wouldn't be made up in June, it would mean some classes could have less time to complete everything. Nicholas Riccardi, Culinary teacher at ORHS, agrees that this could be a difficulty. "I think to always be ready with a remote lesson would be tough, but I think we are more equipped now to handle it," said Riccardi.

Additionally, the ORCSD administration would likely have to make their decision on snow days well in advance to allow teachers the time to plan ahead for their classes. We would likely no longer see the 5 AM cancellation as in previous years, because it is very hard for a teacher to switch a class from in school to remote in such a short period of time. Remote days would be planned either the night before, or a day or two in advance to ensure that teachers are able to successfully plan ahead for their classes. "[Snow days would be called] most likely the day before the storm. I have to wait until the morning of the storm

now, but because your education isn't interrupted, there's no harm in calling it early," said Morse. Riccardi agreed, saying, "It would be hard and could lead to a less active lesson for those remote days, but it's a little easier now cause we know what we're into."

Along with snow days, the School Board is also considering implementing remote learning "heat days" for when the building is too hot in the warmer months. ORCSD Superintendent Dr. James Morse expanded on this idea, and said, "there are times when the middle school and the high school tower are unbearably hot. It would be a great way to use remote learning and not interrupt school."

While nothing yet is final about whether or not these changes become reality, it surely could be one of the greatest lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. M

-Alden Swiesz
Image by WMUR



How ORHS Is Addressing Racism This Year

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, an unarmed black man from Minneapolis, Minnesota was killed by white police officer, Derek Chauvin. He pinned Floyd to the ground and kept his knee on Floyd's neck for at least eight minutes and fifteen seconds, according to the *New York Times* article, "How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody." All of this was because Floyd allegedly bought cigarettes with a counterfeit \$20 bill. This tragedy resulted in an uproar from communities across the country demanding an end to police brutality against unarmed black individuals and giving the Black Lives Matter movement new momentum.

While the murder of Floyd is new and relevant, it's important to remember that the issue of racism has been around for years, and that our community is no exception to that. As reported in the 2018 MOR article, "Systems of Love," by Skye Hamilton ('18), at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, a student of color at the elementary school was taunted with racial slurs and unwanted physical contact while riding the schoolbus.

With these incidents of racism in mind, a group of teachers at ORHS came together to figure out how to handle the issue of racism at the Durham, Lee, Madbury, and Barrington level and make it clear that this is an issue we should be focused on. The committee started meeting over the summer and has continued to meet during the school year. This group is staff focused, and is working with educators about how to develop anti-racist practices in their classrooms by providing resources for educators.

According to Vivian Jablonski, a math teacher at ORHS, the murder of Floyd, among numerous other black individuals, prompted her to get that committee of staff members together to start talking about this issue at ORHS. "I was really struck by everything that was happening after the murder of George Floyd and all the statistics that started to come to light of black men who have been killed in routine police stops and stuff like that. I was thinking a lot about what I might be able to do, what I can bring to my own classroom, and how can I be a role model for students so that they know how to interpret what they're seeing," explained Jablonski.

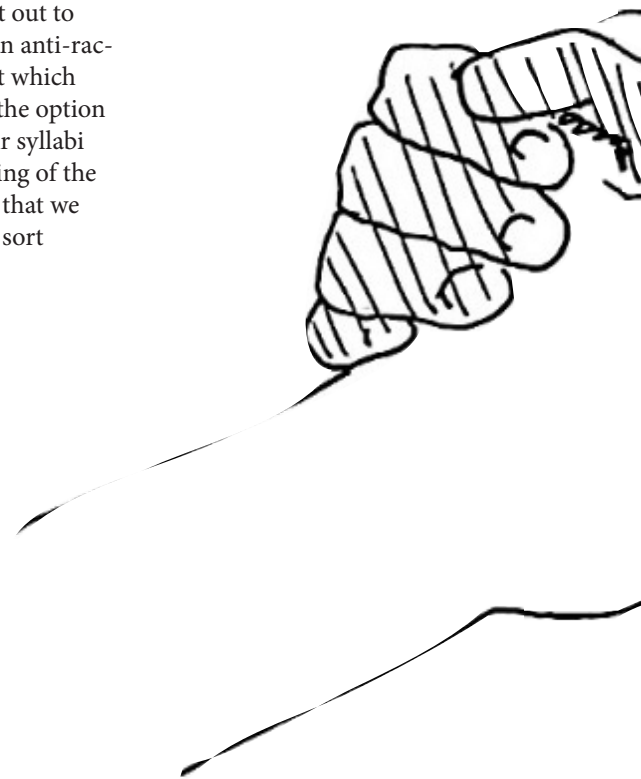
At the start of the summer, Jablonski sent out an email to all ORHS faculty asking if they would want to be a part of a discussion group centered around what is going on in our country regarding the issue of racism, and what can be done at ORHS specifically. Jablonski got a lot of initial responses, and that committee of about twenty staff members soon followed.

This is not the first time racism has been addressed at ORHS. After the incident of racism on the schoolbus, ORHS hosted

a community wide diversity forum. Additionally, the Diverse Student's Union at ORHS has worked on panels and has created a safe space for students. However, the murder of Floyd, and the subsequent protests around the country, were what prompted the first time racism has been acknowledged across the school by a large group of teachers. "It was time. We should have been doing this probably years ago, but this is where we are right now and we are going to do the best we can moving forward," said social studies teacher and member of the committee, Jaclyn Jensen.

The committee formed with an end goal "to address head on the real health concerns and the real danger that people live in because of racism and also to acknowledge our space where we contribute to it, even without knowingly doing so," explained Marjke Yatsevitch, ORHS English teacher and member of the staff discussion group. Yatsevitch brought up the concept of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and explained that racism needs to be treated as a health concern, because if a person of color does not feel safe within school, there is no way they are going to be able to learn.

The first item the staff committee set out to address was an anti-racism statement which teachers had the option to put on their syllabi at the beginning of the year. "We felt that we wanted some sort of statement to



tell our students, and their parents and guardians, that when we started the year, to tell them that we were thinking about this kind of stuff and just to be aware that there might be some changes in the curriculum,” said Jablonski.

Jensen explained, “the syllabus statement was really important for the beginning of the year just to make it really clear to students and our community that this is something that we are going to be exploring more and taking an active role in incorporating in courses.”

The statement reads as follows: “Oyster River High School is working toward becoming an anti-racist institution. Our mission commits us ‘to becoming educated, ethical, responsible citizens,’ and our district policies and strategic plans similarly urge us to address institutional racism at ORHS. To start this work, we will use an all-encompassing approach to review and revise our practices including curriculum, instruction, discipline procedures, and access to resources. This work will be ongoing among the entire ORHS community. Our expectation is not perfection, but an open mindset and growth. As such, we expect and encourage all members of the ORHS community, including students, to seek out trusted resources in other students, faculty, staff, counselors, and/or administration for support and collaborations towards a safe and equitable learning environment.”

Students found the intent with the syllabus statement was good, but it was only useful if teachers talked about it with their class. “I saw it for some parts, but the thing with the teachers is that they kind of brushed over it most of the time. They were like, ‘oh here’s the race statement,’ and then they’d move on. Most of my teachers just zoomed over it. Some of my teachers I don’t even think had it,” said Charlotte Merritt (‘22).

Iris Ingelfinger (‘21) agreed that most teachers didn’t fully address it, saying, “I definitely heard [the syllabus statement] or at least seen it in a couple classes, but teachers were like, ‘you’ve seen this before,’ but I’m not sure how much of it I’ve actually seen.”

Ingelfinger went on to talk about syllabus statement more, saying, “my general takeaway is that I’ve heard the staff and the school say that they’re doing some-

thing to combat racism but I don’t know how it has actually come to fruition, like I haven’t really heard or seen the specific ways in which they’ve done so.”

Through the initial syllabus statement, many of the teachers on the committee are working on bringing some of the elements they have learned through the meetings over the summer into their classrooms this year.

Ingelfinger has already seen this in her orchestra class at ORHS. “I know a few specific teachers who have been basing some of their curriculum around black issues. I know, for example, Ms. von Oyen has been teaching about racism and inequity in the orchestra community and also she’s having a project where students are researching black composers,” said Ingelfinger.

Jablonski, who teaches math, has found this to be more of a challenge compared to a social studies teacher who may already be covering issues of race in their classroom. However, she is “trying to make math more humanized. A lot of people think of math as there were a bunch of these old white European guys that came up with this stuff, here’s the rules, let’s do it.”

Jablonski went on to say, “For me, [the syllabus statement] was kind of just my way of saying math class doesn’t always address this stuff, but me, as a person trying to be a role model for my students, I’m thinking about this all the time and just wanting people who are in my class to be aware of that.”

The issue of racism stems much further than a syllabus statement though. Fully addressing it requires understanding a school is a system.

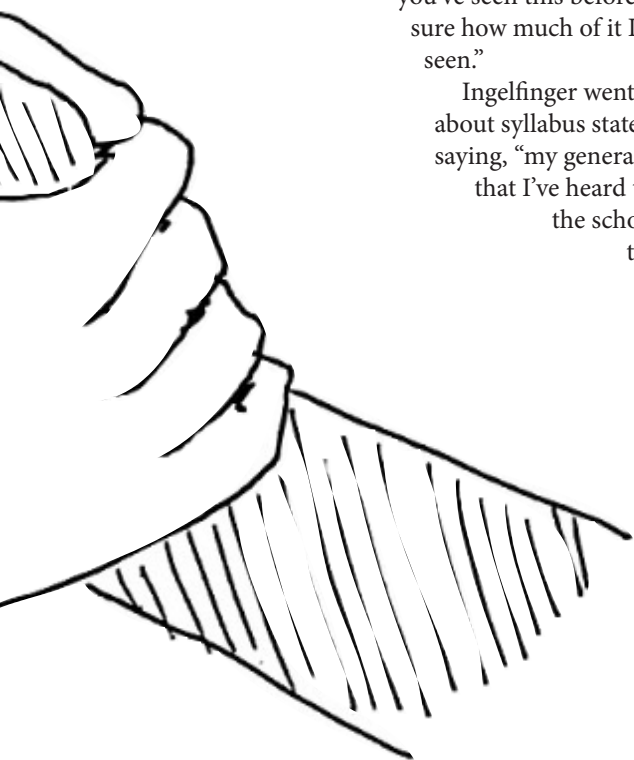
Jensen explained, “Understanding racism as a system is a really important understanding that a lot of white people are learning more about and waking up to. And a school is a system, so I think we need a systemic approach to a systemic problem. With that understanding, we can kind of move forward looking at our institutions, our policies, some of our implicit biases.”

According to Jensen, while individual acts of racism between two people should not be tolerated, the issue is much bigger than that, and is more than just saying, ‘I’m not racist, so I’m not the problem.’

As far as how ORHS has started to address the issue of racism from a systemic approach, Jensen explained, “this is a natural next step for a lot of work that has already been done. We have integrated addressing racism into our strategic plan as a district. Our district has adopted a policy on racism. Our mission statement talks about being ethical and responsible citizens. These kinds of things naturally lead us to taking an anti-racist approach when we understand this framework and we understand the urgency of the work at hand.”

While this is an idea that the staff discussion group has been talking about since the summer, students have yet to see some of these things come to fruition. “My only concern is that it seems like right now they are coming across as saying like, ‘oh, we’re going to be anti racist.’ I don’t actually know all the semantics of what they’re doing but I feel like if it was super effective, maybe we would be hearing more about it,” said Ingelfinger.

One of the biggest reasons why the issue of systemic racism needs to be talked about at Oyster River specifically, is because it is a predominantly white community. “We come from a place of deficit in understanding how we contribute to racist institutional



“Understanding racism as a system is a really important understanding that a lot of white people are learning more about and waking up to. And a school is a system, so I think we need a systemic approach to a systemic problem.”

practices,” said Yatsevitch. What she means is that, as a majority white community, most of us don’t understand the effect that we are having on racism unless we really care to learn about it.

This is especially difficult when we may not explicitly see issues of racism in the building; a lot of the issue comes from microaggressions, or statements that are subtle and unintentional, that target minorities. Even if these are intended as jokes, it doesn’t mean they’re not racist. Merritt said, “there’s definitely a vibe in the school and most people like to play it off as dark humor. I have not experienced much first hand. I have been called twist and Oreos, because my mom is black and I have a white dad.”

Ingelfinger agreed that she rarely hears direct racist attacks or slurs, but said, “I have seen on school Instagram pages people saying, ‘why should we care so much about racism? It’s silly that you care about this.’ I feel like that in and of itself is a microaggression because it’s such a privilege to not have to be concerned about this because it doesn’t affect your day to day life.”

Merritt went on to explain that while one might not experience direct racist attacks, “it’s just been integrated into the humor of the school almost and there’s almost this unspoken rule that you’re not supposed to say anything. You’re not supposed to speak up, you’re not supposed to say anything to teachers, you’re not supposed to be like, ‘why would you say something like that?’ You’re just supposed to laugh,” said Merritt.

Jensen expands on this “vibe” in the school, where it comes from, and that it all goes back to the issue of systemic racism. “It’s important to understand that institutions, or systems, can unknowingly perpetuate harmful dynamics if they’re not actively being examined and reflected upon and addressed.”

The next immediate step that the committee is taking to address some of these harmful dynamics is creating a monthly newsletter for educators at Oyster River. “It’s called ADAGE, which is Anti Racism Discussion and Growth for Educators. We set up a program for that where we have a monthly topic and we will be creating a hyper document that embedded resources and layers for people to enter as deeply into that conversation as they’d like,” explained Yatsevitch.

One long term goal that Jablonski hopes to see is the inclusivity of more diverse staff at Oyster River. The lack of diverse staff comes from the lack of diverse applicants, and that our

community has a long way to go before we will be attractive to people of color. “We talked a lot in our discussion groups about wanting to help bring more diverse faculty and staff to our school and I think it would be fantastic for everybody. But I think we have a long way to go before we would be attractive to people of diverse backgrounds. We have to work on making our community one that is inclusive, is safe, and like I said, values all different identities and I think that that would really help to make this a place where people want to come work.”

While the school is working on addressing this as a system, it is still important to acknowledge everyone’s own individual acts of racism. Merritt concluded by saying, “I think those students who view things like Black Lives Matter, and issues with ethnicity and race, should take a step back and realize it’s not political, it’s not conservative or liberal, it’s not Republican or Democrat, it’s human rights and having human decency to everybody regardless of ethnicity.”

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- Emily Hamilton

Artwork by Acadia Manning





Still/ Distancing?

Living in the bubble of Oyster River, most people understand the dangers of the pandemic, but with low local case numbers and many young people desperate to see their friends after being stuck inside for so long, students and their families are left to weigh their options.

The students of ORHS have to decide whether to tough it out, knowing that the ultimately safest thing to do is to not see anyone, while others prioritize their mental health and the thrill of having an exciting year, seeing their friends, and hoping they don't spread COVID-19. Some members of the Oyster River community have begun to find strategies to somewhat safely come in contact with each other.

"Podding" is a popular technique of controlled contact that many families and students have adopted to start seeing one another without social distancing or wearing masks. When you form a pod, you have a general understanding that the people that you are seeing are also taking safety precautions, social distancing, and wearing masks while in public. If you trust these people, coming within six feet of one another could be safe. Special education teacher, Jennifer McGuinness, has embraced the podding strategy in her own home and recommends it to students. She said, "it's an approach that supports the social and emotional health of the kids, and if we can do it safely, and families can make good decisions around that, I think it's a good idea."

Students like Avery Richard ('21) have continued to see friends that they trust, using the podding technique. "Personally, I feel like there is always going to be a risk now but I think it's good especially since we aren't going into the school. It's good to have that social interaction because it kind of gives us something to look forward to." Some students who choose to see their friends still recognize and respect social distancing while in public. "I don't see why anyone really isn't able to wear a mask and show some respect to others who are at a higher risk," she said.

While many feel comfortable enough to be seeing friends and still feel safe, lots of students don't feel comfortable with this approach. Trinity Chase ('21) said that "because we might be expected to go back [to school], seeing my friends could potentially impact a lot more people, so I'm not risking it." Chase finds that using technology to stay in touch with her friends has made social distancing more bearable. She is still able to keep up with everyone and not feel alone.

Chase's decision to stay mostly quarantined aligns with the recommendations from health experts. Kimberly Wolph, the ORHS nurse said she does "not think it is okay for students or people of any age to see each other and not maintain safe social distance and not follow guidance regarding PPE." While she acknowledges students' desire to see friends and have some in-person interaction, there are other safety precautions she recommends taking. "The key to seeing or being around friends is that it be done in a safe and socially distant manner. For example, getting together with a friend to go for a hike while maintaining distancing guidance, differs greatly from getting together with a large group of friends inside, and in a small space [with people] who are not following guidelines."

Wolph adds, "I think that the Oyster River Community, like many other communities in NH, understand the importance of social distancing and following the recommendations from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and DHHS (United States Department of Health and Human Services). This is new for all of us, and something we have never experienced before." She has been responsible for creating a COVID-19 response plan with the other district nurses, which states the expectations of both students, faculty, and parents for social distancing and PPE within the school environment.

Within the school itself, Wolph says that the students and faculty that come into the school on a regular basis. She said, "all students who are coming into the building are wearing the appropriate PPE and following distancing guidelines. My hope is that this continues when the decision is made to increase the number of students coming into the building each day."

Whether we are in the school physically or not, each of us has the responsibility to understand the effects that our actions have today. "This is where the importance of handwashing, wearing the appropriate PPE and avoiding close contact with others comes into play. The more that we follow these guidelines, the hope is that we can control the spread of this virus," said Wolph.

So whether you choose to see your friends or just stay at home, it is important to trust the people you are with and to respect the recommendations from the government.

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-Liam Ashburner

Rumor Has It...

Whether we are willing to admit it or not, there is something captivating about rumor culture. The act rushing to sit with your friends at lunch after hearing a juicy rumor in the halls. Followed by hurriedly whispering it to them and waiting to see if what you dug up is just as shocking to them as it was to you. Rumors are thrilling. However, they are unpredictable, constantly changing directions and often losing sight of the truth. Many people find themselves happily swapping scandalous stories one day and the ostrich-sized main character of one the next.

Ever since the shift to remote learning, the Oyster River High School student body has been more captivated than ever with the rumor mill. Students have been turning to social media as a prime source of entertainment. Many have even created secret accounts, which post rumors submitted by their peers. With this wave of student-run confessions pages has come a rush of rumors started by students. All of which are being posted online for others to read for entertainment. Many students have faced times where their secrets have been posted without their permission. Even administration, who is more out of the loop than ever, has been having trouble dealing with these rumors and determining whether any of them bring harm to students. Arianna Alcocer, ('21) has observed the transition of rumors from the hallways to social media. "At school you are more cautious about what you say because there are other people in the hallway and you don't want them to overhear that you are talking about someone," Alcocer said. Despite their physical separation from their peers, students have still been searching for their rumor fix and have turned to spreading rumors online. "Our generation is very electronic and without drama we feel like we have nothing to do and get bored," Alcocer continued. With an increasing spread of rumors comes an large amount of false rumors. "People have more time on their hands, so they can really throw more rumors out there," Alcocer said. When in person, rumors were a constant yet quiet presence in the school, only flaring up occasionally when a particularly juicy rumor came along. The spread of information took longer due to the different stories that would be told. With the start of online pages students can go to one source for all of their information and the rumors can spread like a wildfire.

One of the most popular platforms for students to catch

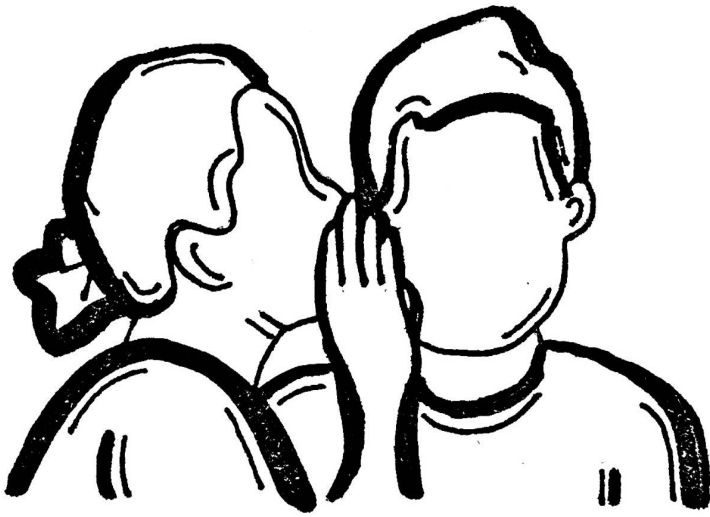
up on the rumors is through Instagram with student accounts such as: or.confessions, orhs.drama, and orhssimps. Since March, many Instagram accounts have been formed with the intent of keeping students entertained. The most dominant of them being OR Confessions, a student-run account that allows for students to anonymously submit rumors which are posted for their peers to see. Confessions was founded in July and since then has amassed over 1,000 followers. "We chose to start this account as a way for members of the Oyster River community to be able to have fun, interact, and bond over a virtual platform. As COVID has isolated us all to our homes, it was important for us to create a unique platform that students would want to participate in," stated the owners of OR Con-

fessions. The admins have offered much needed entertainment for the students at home. Alcocer admits that she, like her peers, has found entertainment through the page. "People follow them because they have nothing else to do, everyone is at home or at their computers and it gives them a sense of normalcy," Alcocer said. The inspiration for the account came from one that had previously existed a few years ago, but failed due to lack of interest. "We thought this would be a perfect opportunity to revitalize this idea," Confessions explained.

With anonymity comes the urge to submit rumors that

students wouldn't say in person. The owners of Confessions explained the measures they take to prevent the exploitation of those who use it: "We just post what we [the admins] deem to be appropriate. The only rule we have is not posting confessions that negatively portrays someone," Confessions said. It is hard, though, to find a perfect balance with rumors that are not hurtful while still keeping people engaged. Sometimes rumors, whether intentional or not, will hurt people. Madelyn Marthouse ('23) has experienced the consequences of rumors first hand. "There was one confession about something that happened to me and they staged it like I had written it," Marthouse said. She then contacted the administrator of Confessions to get the post removed, though she was unsuccessful. Marthouse, who considers herself to be a trustworthy friend, felt betrayed by the leaking of her personal life. "It made me feel terrible, almost sick. How I deal with it is to just not engage. I try my best to move on. I think about how I didn't do anything wrong in this situation and I am able to be the bigger person. It's all about having a positive mindset,"





said Marthouse. While many false rumors are meant to be funny. Some, like Marthouses, are meant to harm.

Mark Milliken, Dean of Faculty at Oyster River, is no stranger to dealing with rumors among the student body. Remote learning has left him feeling out of the loop on what is happening with the Oyster River students. "Generally rumors would manifest in something happening at school. That would be our connection to find things out and now we don't have that," Milliken said. Due to the lack of contact between the faculty and student body, Milliken says the responsibility of monitoring students' lives online and off

"There is a really strong culture of snitches getting stitches. I understand not wanting to get somebody in trouble but there is harm going on. I wish people were more willing to help us shut the rumor mill down,"

falls mostly to parents.

One of the greatest challenges that administration faces when trying to stop the spread of harmful rumors is tracking down the source. QuickTip, a way for students to submit anonymous information to the school, serves as a tool for administration in finding out issues the student body is encountering. According to Milliken, one of their most recent tips was about something posted online by a student regarding an account for student confession. While quick tips serves as a helpful tool in stopping rumors, students have also used it to submit false rumors just to get others in trouble. "It's hard to discern what's real from what's a rumor. We have to treat it all as if it's real, so it takes time to track down information," Milliken said.

While some submissions on confession pages and QuickTip can be light hearted jokes that are aimed to make people smile, far too many of them are at the expense of other people. When rumors do show up containing serious content, that if true needs to be addressed, the anonymous shield that protects students can become a major problem. Milliken recognizes that every rumor needs to be treated as true in case it is, and because of that, digging up information regarding the reliability of a rumor can be hard. Milliken tries to prompt students to be open about the rumors they hear. "There is a really strong culture of snitches getting stitches. I understand not wanting to get somebody in trouble but there is harm going on. I wish people were more willing to help us shut the rumor mill down," Milliken said. With administration feeling less informed on rumors during remote learning, they are having more trouble keeping up with the spread of rumors

and are more in need of student sources for facts. The fact that accounts can also be private and monitor who is allowed to see them adds an additional obstacle for administration when trying to find the culprits of false rumors.

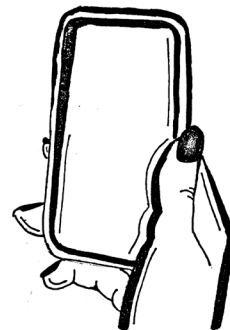
In the case of administration catching wind of a serious rumor that they need help determining the credibility of, they often turn to the Student Resource Officer (SRO) Michael Nicolosi. The SRO's job is to keep students safe and happy at the school, and is ready to step in to try and solve conflicts. The first amendment protects people's freedom of speech, but if there is a criminal aspect to what you say, Nicolosi will step in to take a look. When administration reaches out to Nicolosi, his job is to discuss with them the severity of the rumor before filing a report and investigating the rumor. "Rumors are spread much easier today than in the past. One post can be seen by hundreds to thousands of people. You can also spread rumors anonymously and create fake accounts. Last year, I investigated someone posing as another student and writing inappropriate things claiming to be that student," Nicolosi said. With online rumors comes a certain level of advantage for Nicolosi because many apps have terms of service which relinquish certain rights regarding access to your account. "I can apply for a search warrant, which would grant me access to your account. Once I get the approval of a judge, I could potentially look at data on these accounts," Nicolosi said while explaining that a majority of the online rumors are coming from Instagram and SnapChat which both use these terms of service agreements.

Nicolosi recognizes the appeal of rumors to students and

expressed that, "part of it is also comparing your life to everyone else's life. What is their experience like and how is that different from mine? When I was in high school, I was constantly measuring up my own accomplishments and inexperience to everyone else's experience: "Should I do that? I have not done that yet, maybe I should?" But, how do you know if that person's experience is real or just a made-up story?" Since then, Nicolosi has learned the true detrimental effects of rumors and that no matter how encapsulating they are, students should be wary of them.

With the end of rumor spreading nowhere in sight, Nicolosi shares his hopes for students to start to realize the toxicity of them. "This is the time where we need to work together as a community to be better. Putting others down does not contribute to positive growth, it only creates more issues." **M**

-Madla Walsh



Life Before Oyster River

A profile on ORHS Head Custodian Marek Filip

Before Marek Filip moved to New Hampshire, he had retired from professional ski jumping, served in the Czech military, and had a small shop of 11 motorcycles in the back of his house where he was born and raised in Liberec, Czech Republic.

As ORHS Head Custodian, Filip is a highly respected and integral part of the ORHS community, who already had a lifetime of experiences in the Czech Republic, formally known as Czechoslovakia, before coming to Oyster River.

He began ski jumping in school in 1984, when he was 11, and did it for 10 years. He was a professional ski jumper in his home country throughout high school and traveled within Europe to nearby countries such as Germany, Poland, and Norway for ski jumping.

As a young child, his motivation to start ski jumping came from his step-father. “My step-dad was a ski jumper. Since I was a little kid I was watching him on TV. My step-dad was on the national team, and he is still in some of the books on the history of ski jumping [...] He was my inspiration,” said Filip.

At the time, there was a set of 6 of the biggest ski jumps in the world, what Filip described as the 6 “giants.” When one of them was built in his country, his step-father was the second person to jump it. “The last time I was in Europe, we visited a museum, and my step-dad had donated some of my stuff and his stuff to the ski jumping museum. When we were visiting, there were young ski jumpers walking with their coach, and the person in the museum introduced my step-dad to them as a ski jumping legend because he was the second one to jump off that giant,” shared Filip.

Inspired by his step-father’s success, Filip went to a special part of the school for skiers, because the athletes were spending a lot of time in the mountains, and travelling to matches. His school, called ZS Jestedska, was divided into two parts: one for skiers and one for regular students. “We spent a lot of time in the mountains training and getting in shape. So, we had to do a lot of studying on our own and when we were in the school, we had to work hard and catch up to regular high school students.”

He started at that school when he was 11, and graduated at age 15. At his high school, “my only option was to study Russian, so I studied Russian for 2 years, which was mandatory for me. After 1989, when my country had

a revolution, and was going from communism to capitalism, they changed the rules in schools. You were able to pick from German or English, so I studied 3 years of German, and 1 year of English.” Although Filip studied Russian in high school and German in college, he spoke Czech primarily.

During this revolution, Filip was a senior in high school, preparing for college. Filip described the 1989 revolution, and said, “it was a scary time because there were college students walking through the streets and protesting, and there were riots. There were things that happened between students, the military, and the police, with people getting hurt.”

Once Filip was old enough to go to college, getting a degree became his top priority. He attended a state school in the Czech

Republic, and focused on hotel management and culinary arts. He chose these areas of study because, “With the ski team I spent a lot of time traveling and staying in hotels. I love mountains and the idea of one day owning a small hotel with a restaurant in the mountains. Another reason is that I like food and cooking.”

He began to jump less because of college. He explained that it was difficult to practice with his schedule, and he did not have much time for it. “I wasn’t getting enough practice so I was not doing so well during the season one year. I started doing practices with my dad, and he ended up being my coach. When I got in good shape, and everything started working out, I got in a ski jumping accident,” said Filip.

He ended up in the hospital after the accident, and his mother was reluctant to let him ever do it again. He still went back, but “[ski jumping] was never the same [...] There was not enough time or finances.”

Once he finished college, he realized he had to work to pay the bills. Filip worked in restaurants and got a full time job as a cook. He then got a letter in 1995 that he had to serve in the Czech military, and explained that was pretty much the end of competitive ski jumping for him personally.

“Back when it was mandatory, anybody who was 18 years and older had to join and serve. It was manda-

tory service for 2 years,” said Filip. He continued on to say, “when I was [in the military] it was okay, I didn’t mind it. You have to listen to what they say and even if you didn’t like it, you had to do



it. So, sometimes that was not as much fun.”

Filip was stationed at a base in the mountains near his hometown. That base he was at was called DUKLA. Liberec had two bases, “one large base was downtown of the city and the second smaller base was located in the city also, but close to the bottom of the mountains. I was stationed on the smaller base,” he said. Because of the proximity to the mountains, skiing remained prevalent in his life, even if he was not competing, while he was in the service. “This base was very sports oriented. Pretty much every person I know who was in that base was somehow related to skiing,” he said.

He stayed connected to ski jumping while in the service by travelling with the national team. He was not a member of the national team because he was in the service, but supervised it for about a year. Eventually, due to finances, he was no longer able to travel with the team. Only a select few athletes traveled, due to lack of funding.

After his time in the military, in 2002, Filip moved from the Czech Republic to the United States when he was 25, which was not easy for him. “[Moving from Europe to here] was tough. Obviously, I had it easier than other people because I had my dad over here, so I had some kind of support, so that was the easy part. But it still was financially a big strain because, as I said before, I love motorcycles, and at one point I had a small little shop in the back of the house where I grew up and I was building motorcycles. I used to own 11 motorcycles. I pretty much had to sell everything to keep money, so I could survive and make it until I got all of my paperwork squared away over here. All that takes time, so the financial part was the toughest,” he said.

He came to New Hampshire from Czech to be with his dad, who moved to the US because of the Czech government. After receiving all of his paperwork, he started looking for a job. His first job was working as a bouncer in one of the bars in Portsmouth. After that, he painted houses, did some carpentry work, and then applied for a job as a custodian at Oyster River in 2003. Living in Durham with his wife at the time, Oyster River was a perfect fit for him due to the proximity to his house. Filip worked for two years as a custodian at ORHS, then in 2005 became Head Custodian for Mast Way for two years, and then he got promoted to be Head Custodian at ORHS in 2007, where he is today. “I love to learn new things so it is an opportunity to work in a great place,

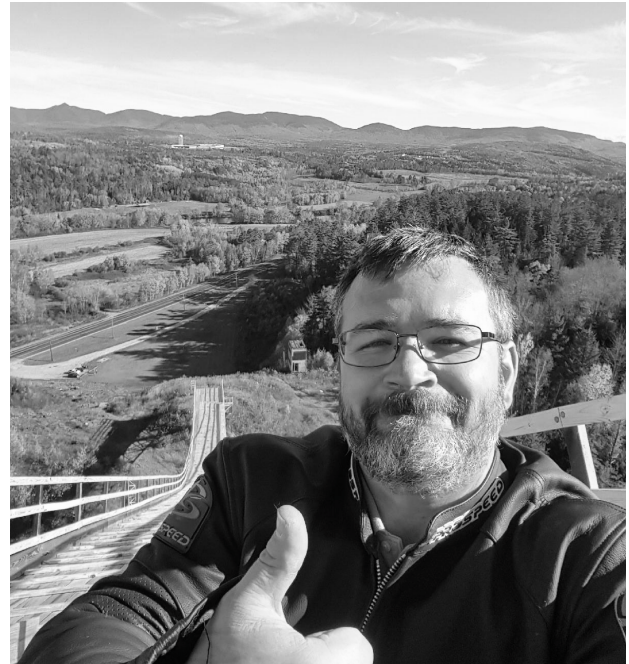


with lots of interesting people, as I can learn a lot about them and local culture,” said Filip.

In the ORCSD, Filip is highly regarded and respected by many. Multiple people spoke to his work ethic and unwavering devotion. As head custodian, “he does everything from daily regular things

like keeping the building clean and safe. Anything that is set up for students or faculty, he’s been involved with. Even with the town, like voting, and athletic events, the custodians are involved with all of that, and he’s behind the scenes with everything. A lot of times he’s integral in making it happen,” Suzanne Filippone, ORHS Principal shared.

Filip leads a team of seven other individuals that report to him for daily assignments and activities. He also manages scheduling, and events at the high school during and after school. “People like him have a natural ability to lead and take a lot of things thrown at them at one time and not flip out. He has a patience to him that is very valuable and appropriate,” said Jim Rozycki, ORCSD Facili-



ties Director.

Along with all the work he does for our ORHS community, Filip also runs a small construction business, and does projects like building additions and garages, which is one more thing to balance in his busy life.

Nate Fisk, who worked under Filip for four years and is now Head Custodian at ORMS, also spoke highly of Filip. “He’s a hard worker. He’s all about work. He’s an all around good guy; he’ll do anything for you in the drop of a dime. He’s very easy going. He’s anything that you could want in a supervisor.”

Filippone agreed with Fisk’s sentiments, and said, “his work ethic definitely [stands out to me]. He really cares. He cares about the kids, he cares about the school, and that stands out also.”

Filip has had many experiences throughout his life that have made him the person and leader he is today. He is an integral part of the community who has made an impact on many people throughout his life. Filippone said, “when you said that you wanted to interview me about Marek, I just had this big smile on my face. Hearing that made me really happy and excited because I think that he really deserves more recognition, and the custodians deserve more recognition than they typically get [...] We are all really, really lucky to have him at the high school.” **M**

-Holly Reid

Images courtesy of Marek Filip

Bottled Up

How the avoidance of emotions negatively affects us

As I was driving home from soccer practice one night, I was listening to The Darin Olien Show, a podcast that goes over society's fatal conveniences - the things we do that we're indoctrinated into thinking we have to, even though those very things are negatively affecting us, and in some cases, slowly destroying and even killing us. In this episode (episode 10), the host, Darin Olien, was going over the fatal convenience of avoiding your emotions. A few weeks later, my Psychology class went over the societal influences which cause us to avoid expressing our emotions, and how that can be harmful to our health. This got me thinking about my own life and my experience with the avoidance of emotions, and I began to notice how relevant this is in society and I decided to investigate further.

We have all grown up with the social expectations that boys aren't supposed to show much emotion. On the other hand, we've been taught that girls are overly sensitive and show too much emotion. These stereotypes have been around for so long that it has become almost normal now. It is evident that, as a society, we all avoid our emotions to a certain extent and it isn't healthy because it can lead to behavioral and physical consequences.

"It's difficult for many people to express their emotions and seek comfort for them because they've never learned how to do so safely or effectively. Children learn early in life that uncontrolled expressions of emotion can result in teasing, emotional or physical abuse, embarrassment or humiliation, and ultimately rejection," said local psychologist Michael Kandle. Because we have grown up with all of these social influences surrounding emotions, that makes it harder for some people to open up about their emotions.

As children, we are all influenced by stereotypes. "Society makes up a lot of how we grow up and what we think it is right to

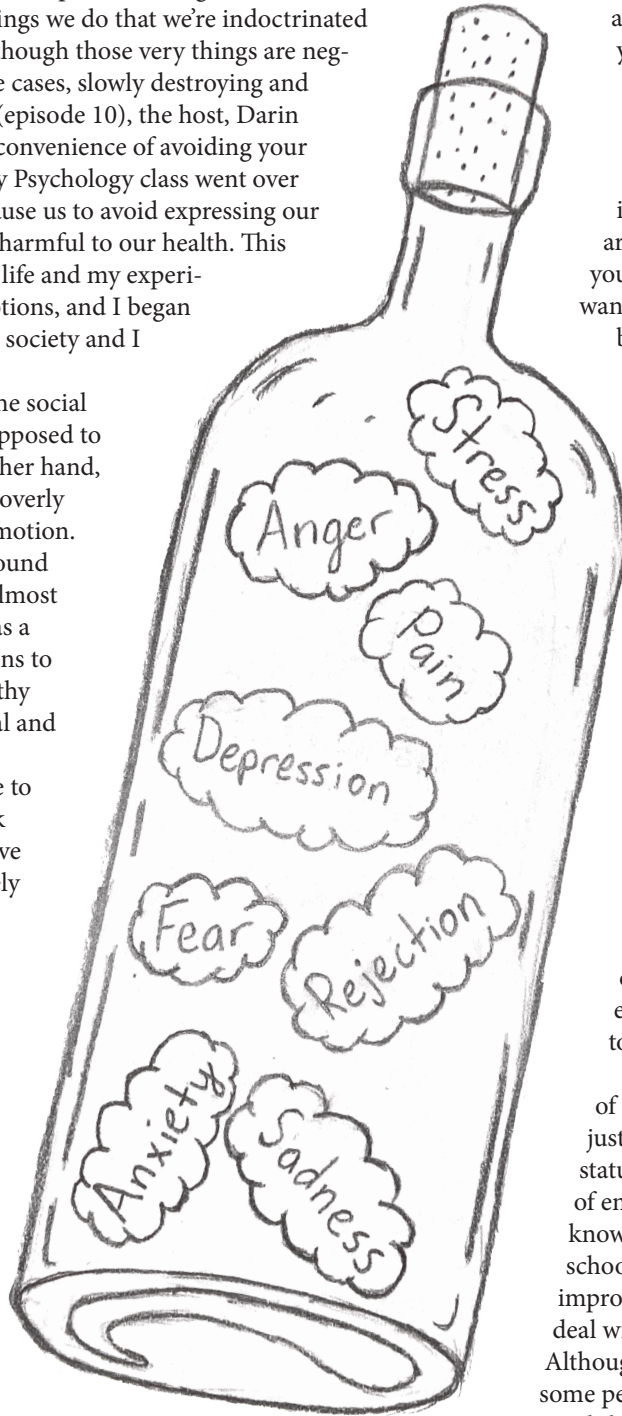
become. I think it is extraordinarily difficult to become someone who is unique, because you are affected by so many people that sometimes you can lose yourself," said Henry Zent ('22).

I noticed similar things that Zent did as I got older. When I was younger, there was nothing wrong with being true to yourself. Being true to yourself is important because if you are not expressing your emotions, you are not acting like yourself. This means that you are portraying this persona that society wants you to be, not who you actually are. This is because your emotions are a big part of who you are.

As I transitioned into middle school there were many more social influences. For example, with the introduction of social media, everyone cared about more materialistic things other than having fun and being yourself. There was this whole new concept introduced about being popular and your social status that everyone was focused on. Zent noticed similar things, and said, "I think that at least for me, in middle school and freshman year people wanted to become popular and hang out with popular groups. But in the older years of high school I don't see that as much and there isn't a group you have to be accepted by in Oyster River High School." I now realize, looking back that I too lost part of who I was during middle school. I didn't express who I truly was in order to "fit in," and to avoid being ostracized.

As we moved into high school, for many of us our focus changed from social status to just being yourself. Because people cared about status, this led to a decrease in the expression of emotions in fear of being judged. "You get to know yourself so much better throughout high school and as you get older your self confidence improves and that contributes to your ability to deal with your emotions," said Ella Stasko ('21). Although these focuses shift, it is still very hard for some people to express their emotions.

While for some people it becomes easier to openly express their emotions, there are certain societal pressures that make it harder for others. One of these



expectations is typically that males aren't supposed to show much emotion at all, and that anger and pride are the only socially acceptable emotions for them to express. This causes males to continue to not show their emotions into adulthood. I have experienced this myself. When I was younger I was influenced by peers and stereotypes around being a boy that led to me not expressing my emotions. Although that was a long time ago, I still don't.

While for males they are told to not openly express their emotions, females are pressured to grow up too fast emotionally. This is because of social influence from things like social media and the need to fit in. "I think that women are labeled as more emotional," said Stasko. This label causes them to put on an emotional mask to fit the mold of societal expectations. This emotional mask leads to them feeling as though they can't express who they truly are. Because of this, some females' emotions aren't taken as seriously because most of the time they are viewed as being over sensitive. This is harmful because it makes girls feel as though they can't express their emotions, and have to fit this perfect mold in our society in order to be accepted.

Holding our emotions in can lead to negative effects. "In addition to worsening anxiety, depression, and anger, there are also physical and behavioral consequences of ignoring emotions," said Kandle. He explained that sleep, concentration, motivation, social connections, eating habits, and immune health can all be impaired due to ignoring emotions. Along with this, self medication in the form of drugs, alcohol, and escapism can be overused.

There can also be long term effects. According to "Why 'Bottling it up' can be Harmful to Your Health" by The Hospitals

Others also have things that they do to take their mind off of things. "Soccer is definitely my outlet that I use the most, because at least for me, dealing with them by physically working is the best way for me to do that," said Zent. Physical exercise is a good way to help with emotions. According to "Benefits of Exercise" by Ulifeline, when you exercise, endorphins are released in your brain and improve your mood. Stasko also uses exercise to deal

with her emotions: "I mainly express them to friends or if I'm really stressed or sad about something I'll go for a run," she said.

However, physical exercise isn't the only solution to dealing with our emotions. "The remedy for this is to cultivate relationships with friends and loved ones who respect the importance of emotion and will respond to them with understanding, empathy, compassion, reassurance, and other forms of support," said Kandle. One of the best ways to actually deal with our emotions is to have people that you can talk through them with.

Hawley finds that opening up to someone allows us to be vulnerable,

which is very important. "If you go down that road you might not be able to have those experiences that vulnerability affords you, which is insight into your personality and your self. There are many things that you are not aware of that others folks see in you," he said.

One other way that some deal with their emotions is to use them to fuel and motivate other areas of their life. "You can take that adrenaline and that anger and you can transmute it into action into steps forward, and not feed more of the anger, fear, guilt and sadness," said Olein in episode 10 of his podcast.



"It's difficult for many people to express their emotions and seek comfort for them because they've never learned how to do so safely or effectively. Children learn early in life that uncontrolled expressions of emotion can result in teasing, emotional or physical abuse, embarrassment or humiliation, and ultimately rejection"

Contribution Fund of Australia, "a 2013 study by the Harvard School of Public Health and the University of Rochester showed that people who bottled up their emotions increased their chance of premature death from all causes by more than 30%, with their risk of being diagnosed with cancer increasing by 70%."

Hawley spoke on these negative effects, and said, "the answer is not to express, but the answer is to discover what is happening inside of your brain while you are experiencing these things, and to a certain extent regulate the negative outcome of that which simultaneously acknowledging its existence, if you just ignore the emotions it can come back and hurt you."

Avoiding our emotions can lead to a variety of negative mental and physical consequences, but it is so hard for many to actually express them because of societal pressure. As a society we say there needs to be change about what emotions are viewed as "acceptable" because it is negatively affecting everyone to some degree. Kandle said, "emotions are valuable signals of various needs that require attention. If the emotions are ignored, those needs go unmet, just as ignoring thirst will lead to dehydration." **M**

-Ethan Wilson

A PROFILE ON LESLIE AYERS

For those of you looking for Ms. Ayers in the halls last year, you wouldn't have had much luck finding her. Leslie Ayers is a Spanish teacher at ORHS, who took a break from teaching to spend time as a student. She spent the year learning more about who she is and what she wants as an educator, honing in on the development of world language curriculum.

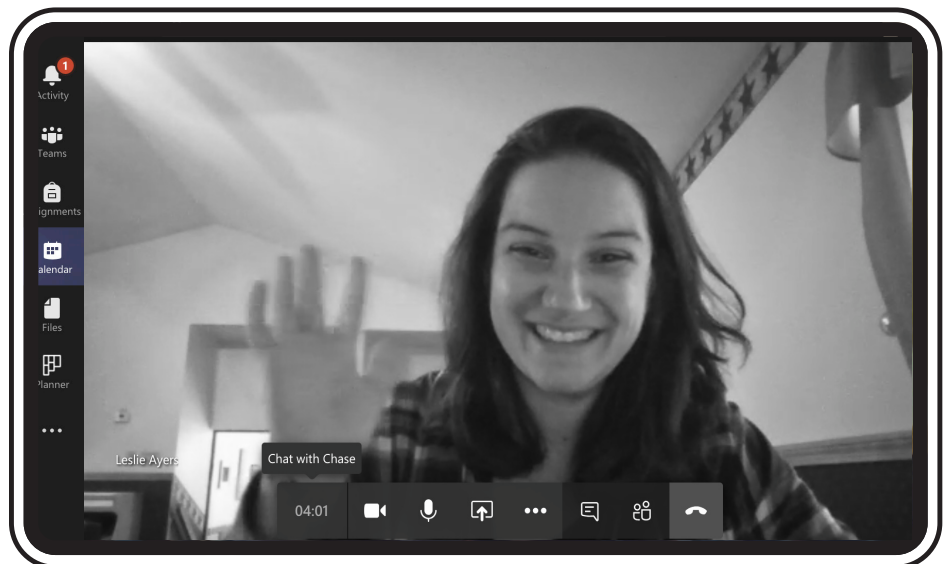
While many students know her from her previous years teaching, Ayers was out of the classroom during the 2019/2020 school year on sabbatical - a paid timespan in which a teacher works to further their career or education in order to bring something back to the school. While Ayers knew that she wanted to continue teaching and working in education, she took a year to explore further paths and find a direction that interests her. Ayers used this time to further her education in curriculum development, and learn more about other programs educators are using to teach world language in New England.

Ayers began planning her sabbatical by thinking about her future and what direction of education interested her most. She wanted to create "new windows" that she would be able to open when the time comes. "The year before I applied for the sabbatical, I was looking for something to change up my routine a little bit. I was trying to figure out where I wanted to go...and who I was as a professional teacher," said Ayers. She was able to tie her interest back to her classroom, and help better the world language program at ORHS. "I started looking into wanting to develop my skills in the realm of curriculum development. And that came out of the whole world language shift and our search for a new curriculum design in general. It was kind of the perfect storm."

Once she was settled with focusing on curriculum development, the first thing Ayers did during her sabbatical was go to UNH to finish getting her master's degree. "I was working on my master's degree in educational studies with a focus in curriculum instruction and leadership. I also did a little bit of work for the [school] district in the realm of looking at a k-12 world language program," said Ayers. "I had hoped to do a ton of school visits through the months of March and June by going to Massachusetts schools and Maine schools that were already kind of working in this new curriculum model." Ayers ended up making connections both remotely and in person, learning virtually from other teachers during the pandemic. Ayers and Todd Allen, the ORCSD Assistant Superintendent, were able to physically visit some schools across New England and take a better look at their language programs during

the majority of 2019. One school that stuck out to both of them was in Danbury, Connecticut. Students gauge at an early age, by the time they are in middle school. Most students there graduate high school trilingual. Ayers chose to continue studying how curriculum in world language can affect students' abilities to perform and succeed. On the plus side, she was able to remotely complete a research project for her master's degree by talking with a wide variety of people about all things world language.

With the information they gathered, both Ayers and Allen worked on a new world language curriculum together while Ayers was on sabbatical. Unfortunately, the proposal was put on hold by the school board because of everything COVID-19, but Allen hopes the district can review it when everything clears up. "One of the really exciting things about a sabbatical is it's a great opportunity for a teacher that's experienced and really capable, but it gives them another outlet to grow and get stronger. I think Ms. Ayers is a great teacher, and giving her the opportunity to do a sabbatical at that point in her career was a really good thing for her professionally. I just think Ms. Ayers did a great job and gave



some really great stuff for our district," said Allen.

The proposed k-12 language curriculum was requested by the school board, and developed by Ayers and Allen to help introduce world languages to students at a younger age. "Our dream is to create a world language program where kids graduate from high school fluent in a language other than English," said Allen. "It was really well timed that it was a goal that the board set and then Ms.

Ayers had an interest in exploring curriculum options and things of that sort. We ended up doing visits with eight different school districts that had k-12 world language programs. [Ayers] conducted a significant amount of research behind finding and connecting with these schools so we could learn from the models they already had in place.”

In the k-12 world language curriculum, there are two main models. The first is a FLEX (foreign language exploratory) model, which gradually introduces world language in elementary school with simple language and cultural teachings. Students may begin to

ing via the cameras.” Ayers has learned that she has to rely on older teaching techniques rather than the ones she had studied and was planning to use this year. “Instead of doing a lot of group work and conversation in the classroom like I would be normally if I was in person, I’m relying a little bit more on written work, and grammar techniques, and all these kinds of things that I was trying to move away from.”

While transitioning to online teaching may have been a lot of work for Ayers, it hasn’t seemed to have affected her students at all. Tess Brown (‘23), is taking her first class with Ayers this year. Brown didn’t know who Ayers was until September, and when asked about Ayers’ sabbatical last year, Brown replied, “I had no idea [she had been on sabbatical]. She’s been fantastic [with remote teaching]. She’s been really getting everyone involved and is always doing group activities that kids are getting very interested in and really enjoying in her class. I could never be able to tell that she didn’t have prior experience with teaching remotely,” said Brown. Brown added that she feels like she’s actually learning Spanish in Ayers’ class.

After talking to a student who thinks of Ayers as one of her favorite teachers, it is clear that she was missed last year. Acadia Manning (‘21) had Ayers for Spanish 3, and seemed to enjoy every minute of it. “She was this perfect mix of a really good educator but she was just chill enough that you felt comfortable. I know

have language class once a week, but class time will increase as they get older. “The idea of that model is to just simply get kids thinking about and exposed to other cultures and languages with the idea that at a point later on, usually fifth or sixth grade, kids will pick a language to study in depth,” explained Allen.

Another model, one of Ayers’ and Allen’s favorites, is called the FLES (foreign language in the elementary school). Like a FLEX model, elementary students are introduced to world language, but study it in a more serious manner, to the point where they become proficient in certain areas. Allen said that this model starts elementary students with world language classes 3-4 times a week for 20-30 minutes. He also said, “the idea is to really try to immerse the kids in the language itself, so that earlier on, kids are learning, speaking, and communicating in the language. The earlier you start learning a language, the more you can absorb it.”

After all the research Ayers had conducted, she had to go against her findings and construct a totally different model for remote learning. While she was able to examine how some schools are dealing with teaching world language remotely, Ayers didn’t get as much experience with online learning as other ORHS educators may have had from the spring of 2020. She has had to change the way she presents information in her class based on the feedback she has received from her students in these first couple of months, while other teachers may already know how to remotely teach their students. Not only is this a change in her teaching platform, but Ayers has had to make adjustments on how her students are reacting. “The way world language education is going right now is really focused on communicating, and using, and living in the language as much as possible. The remote setting has not been conducive to doing that. I’ve found that I am trying to teach my kids how to communicate, but they’re nervous about communicat-

in previous Spanish classes it was just stressful because I had no idea what they were saying, so she really knew when to use English and when to use Spanish. I felt really comfortable and I felt like I learned a lot in that class,” said Manning. “Every so often we would go in during lunch just because we wanted to say hi to her, and she was so sweet.” While looking back on her experiences with Ayers, Manning added, “I just wish I could have another class with her. Spanish wasn’t even my best subject, but she made it so enjoyable for me.”

Like Manning, Allen thinks of Ayers as a great teacher, but also applauds her work and passion for curriculum. “I can’t say enough good things about the efforts [Ayers] put into [the curriculum work]. I would hate to lose her as a teacher, but her mind for understanding the bigger picture of curriculum is really strong,” Allen said. “I have a dream that at some point we’ll have a world language curriculum director for our district that can really pull it all together, and she definitely has a strong mind for that stuff.”

Ayers is very happy to be back at ORHS, and appreciates those who missed her last year. “It’s been really great to pick up with students that I haven’t seen for over a year, and see where they’ve grown.”

When asked to share advice with students that she has picked up during her sabbatical, Ayers responded: “I guess my biggest message for kids is to follow your passions and things that interest [you], because you never know where it might lead you. I took the sabbatical at a time where I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do and what my purpose was as a teacher, and it gave me a chance to think a little more deeply about why I do what I do.” **M**

-Chase Amarosa



Quarantine Cuisine

How COVID-19 has promoted an at-home culinary revolution

Fluffy beignets dusted with powdered sugar, crispy chocolate chip cookies, pasta with a fragrant homemade sauce... for students such as Oyster River senior Kate Domaleski and Phillips Andover junior Sabby Clemmons, quarantine has been a time for churning out recipe after delicious recipe.

For many students, the COVID-19 pandemic has been an opportunity to discover new hobbies and rekindle old ones while staying safe at home. One of the most popular pastimes, as demonstrated by the sourdough/banana bread craze on social media, has been cooking. Young people in particular have been using the long weeks of isolation to bake, fry, and even microwave up some delicious meals, whether they're exploring the culinary arts for the first time or are seasoned experts in the kitchen.

Clemmons is a prime example of a student who has established her love for all things cooking. "When I was in sixth grade I got really interested [in cooking] because of shows like Masterchef and Kids Baking Championship. I actually wanted to compete on one of those shows, so I started practicing a lot," Clemmons explained. "It's been a hobby that's really stuck with me." To illustrate her love of all things out of the oven, Clemmons runs a baking-themed Instagram page (@whatssabbybaking) where she shares photos of the various goodies she prepares, which have grown in considerable number since the beginning of quarantine in March.

"I go to a boarding school and I can't bake there because there's not really an oven for me to use," Clemmons explained, mentioning she was grateful for the time quarantine has given her to pursue her culinary passions in her own kitchen. However, not every aspect of this situation has been ideal for Clemmons' cooking interest.

"Because so many more people are taking up this hobby - which makes me really happy because I love sharing food with people and learning about different methods for different recipes - a lot of things have been missing from the grocery store, like flour and yeast, so it is a little bit more difficult to get some of the



Despite the difficulty of getting ingredients, Domaleski was able to eventually find what she needed, using the long days at home to try some new recipes, her favorite of which was a fried dough pastry called beignets, inspired by none other than Disney's *Princess and the Frog*.

"They didn't taste as good as I thought," Domaleski admitted, "but it was fun because I'd never had beignets before and it was exciting because *The Princess and the Frog* is my favorite movie and I was listening to the soundtrack in the kitchen. [The beig-

"The second you learn how to cook for yourself, you're also learning how to keep yourself healthy."

essentials," Clemmons explained.

The impact of this shortage can be seen by more than just avid home chefs, however. The signs in grocery stores that instruct shoppers to only buy one of a certain category of item - such as sugar or flour - are put up for all to see.

Domaleski agreed with Clemmons' remarks, describing the situation as "almost apocalyptic."

nets] reminded me of being in Disney, or some place that wasn't home."

Like Domaleski, cooking can be a way for many students to escape the monotony of life at home and create something new and delicious. The recipe you follow doesn't have to be as complex as Domaleski's beignets to be good for your soul, however.

“[Cooking] cures boredom and is a great stress reliever. It’s something that’s really fun and usually it turns out okay, but even if it doesn’t look good, it always tastes good!”

“I think creating things is really good for mental health,” Domaleski said, “because if you create something you love, you feel proud of your work.” In the age of remote learning, when assignments seem to quietly pile up in Schoology, finding moments of calm can be difficult, and whipping up a recipe might just be the best part of your day.

Not only can taking up cooking have delicious results and possibly relieve some stress, it’s a valuable life skill that can improve your overall health. Nick Ricciardi, culinary arts teacher and coach of the track team at Oyster River High School, explained why he believes cooking is a hobby worth trying.

“Knowing how to cook for yourself will allow you to eat healthier and more nutritious meals, and in general understanding what you’re making from scratch will allow you to manage all of your nutrients better,” Ricciardi explained. According to Ricciardi, cooking at home is a great way to avoid added sugars or hidden sodium and fats that are so common in processed foods. “The second you learn how to cook for yourself, you’re also learning how to keep yourself healthy, and I think that’s important.”

Some students, such as ORMS 8th grader Sarah Ellsworth, have transformed this hobby and life skill into a source of income. Ellsworth started a granola business out of her kitchen during quarantine because she was “bored, like all of us,” and decided granola was an easy, healthy, and delicious way to make some cash. Ellsworth strongly recommends her peers try cooking at home, stating that “[Cooking] cures boredom and is a great stress reliever. It’s something that’s really fun and usually it turns out okay, but even if it doesn’t look good, it always tastes good!”

Ricciardi agreed with Domaleski and Ellsworth’s assertions that there are mental health benefits to cooking that can help combat COVID anxieties. “A lot of people like to cook because it keeps your focus on what you’re doing, especially when it’s fast paced. It can be a distraction in a good way to get your mind off of other things.”

And, luckily for busy students, it’s never been easier to start cooking from home. Living in a digital world, there’s a wealth of recipes in the universe for students to try. Whether you prefer old-fashioned cookbooks like Clemmons, take inspiration from movies like Domaleski, or prefer to scroll through TikTok, Instagram, or Pinterest to find the latest food trends, there are thousands of recipes to try. So if you’re up for a challenge or feeling like a minute microwave mug cake is more your speed, there’s something for everyone, no matter what’s in the pantry or how much time you have.

Being stuck at home during this pandemic has opened up a world of opportunity for students to explore new hobbies, and cooking has not only been a popular and proven stress-buster, but

an important life skill to develop. You don’t have to be an expert to learn your way around the kitchen, which Clemmons said best: “even if you can only cook eggs right now, why don’t you take those eggs and learn to make a souffle?” **M**

-Ella Gianino

*Photos courtesy of
@whatssabbybaking on
Instagram*





Rise Up!

Social Activism at ORHS

For students interested in political and social activism, Oyster River has plenty of opportunities to get involved.

Interest in youth engagement is increasing worldwide, and over the past few years, Oyster River High School has grown and expanded its advocacy platforms. From school clubs to social outreach, there are plenty of ways to participate within the community. Students have been using these means to foster important conversations. In doing so, they have created a culture of engagement in the school and they're confident that their involvement starts conversations within the community. Anyone interested in joining the movement shouldn't look much further than their peers to start taking action themselves.

Frequently, students are sympathetic to certain causes, but are unsure how to start taking action for them. ORHS appeals to these students by advertising all of their options. For example, Charlotte Merritt ('22) described that, despite being interested in racial activism for many years, she didn't start getting involved until her freshman year. "I heard an announcement about the Diverse Students' Union one day, and I was like, I guess I'll start with that," said Merritt. "I've been involved ever since."

Merritt was also inspired to speak out by seeing her peers being politically active. Since joining the Diverse Students' Union, she's become an executive board member, and also participates in Sustainability Club and Best Buddies.

Roshnni Rajkumar ('21), another involved student, describes Oyster River as a good starting point for activism. "There are always ways to improve, but ORHS seems more aware than some other schools. The community isn't super diverse, but it's pretty accepting, and teachers push students to educate themselves," she said.

Wavery Oake-Libow ('23) had a similar comment, saying "we do a pretty good job as a community in terms of people getting out there."

However, the community wasn't always this enthusiastic. Gabrielle Anderson, a Social Studies teacher at ORHS, remarked that students are more vocal now than they were when she first began teaching six years ago. "If you walked into a class a few years ago, it would have sounded entirely different. You didn't see a lot of young people getting involved. Now, they see that their voices matter."

Vivian Jablonski, a math teacher at ORHS, also shared her support for students speaking up. She feels that it also helps to put things in perspective. “Even when there’s lots of negative things in the news, sometimes you can find those pockets of groups that are speaking up and causing change,” she said. “They’re little glimmers of hope.”

More interest means more opportunities to make change, and students who are already involved in social justice encourage their peers to get connected within the community. That can look like joining a club or volunteering with an organization, but it’s also as simple as doing a little research. As Oake-Libow suggested, “I think people should read more about topics they’re interested in. Then they can have an educated conversation about them.”

Similarly, Rajkumar shared, “if you want to get involved, there’s always a way. It’s easy to get connected to people who are passionate about the same things you are.”

Additionally, Jablonski and Anderson advocate for students to speak up in class, even if they are intimidated to discuss issues that matter to them with their teachers.

Jablonski remembers being a student and feeling like, “my teachers were the authority figures, and they had this power and influence over me. That led me to be nervous about speaking up or communicating.” However, since becoming a teacher, Jablonski sees it differently. “Now that I’m a teacher, I see the other side. Faculty and staff want to help you with your passions and what you want to do.”

On the whole, both students and staff support youth engage-

ment. Whether it’s inspiring others to get involved, or drawing attention to an important issue, students can have a significant influence.

At Oyster River, a lot of emphasis is placed on the value of being educated. “We’re the ones that the future is going to affect. It’s everyone’s duty to be aware of what’s going on in the world,” said Rajkumar. Merritt agreed, saying that getting involved early makes a huge difference.

“The key to truly being the inclusive community that we insist that we are starts with educating children at a very young age,” said Merritt. “And I think that’s impactful.”

For those wanting to be a part of that impact, ORHS offers a variety of social justice clubs, including Diverse Students’ Union, Oyster River Young Democrats, Oyster River Young Republicans,

and Sustainability Club. Information about all of those clubs and more can be found on the ORHS website. Besides clubs, students can also simply get connected online by

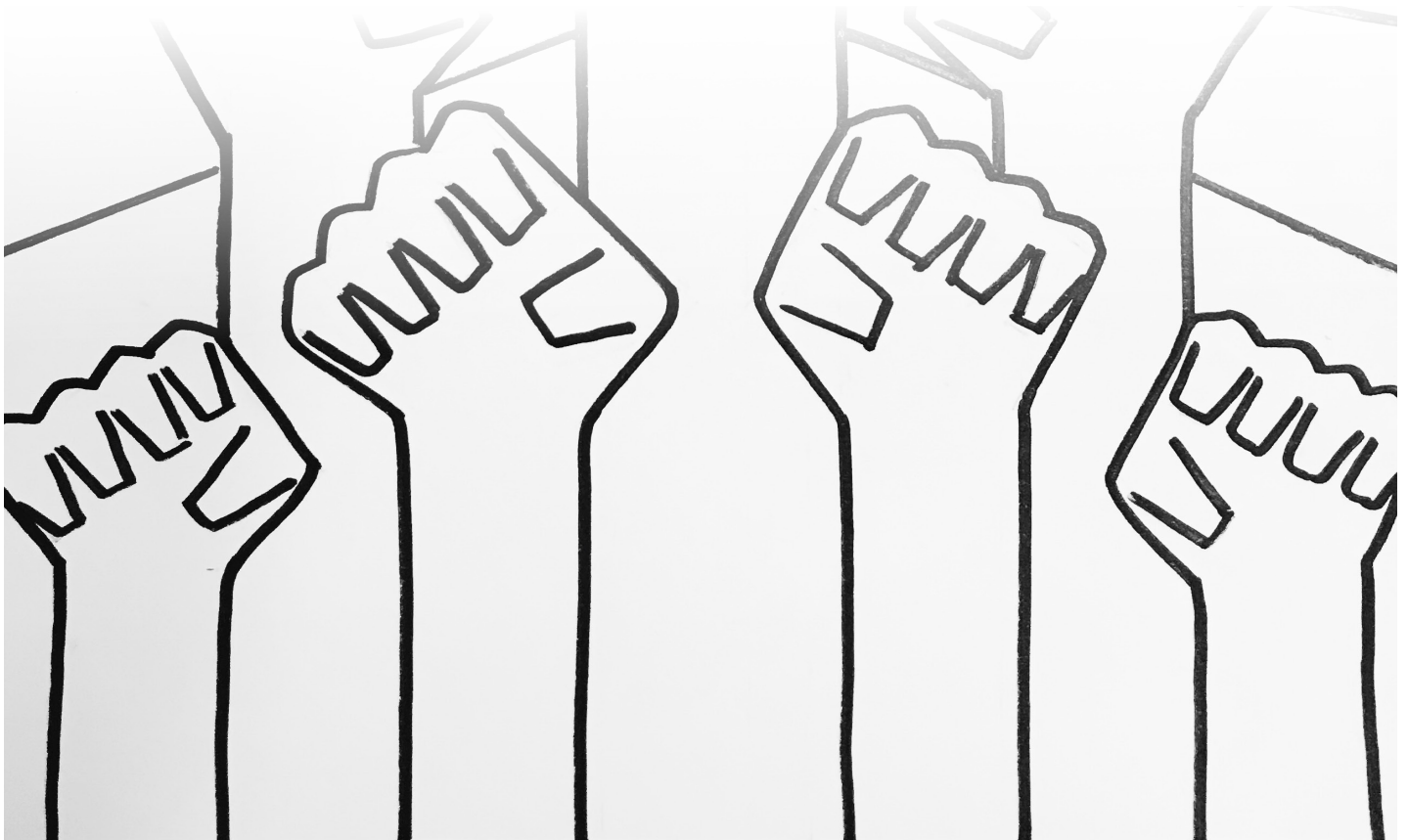
doing research, posting on social media, or reaching out to others.

Rajkumar, Merritt, Oake-Libow all encourage students to reach out to them if they want to know more about taking action. As Merritt puts it, the first step to take is to “reach out.” Once students discover what they’re passionate about, they have plenty of options to get engaged in the community. **M**

“Even when there’s lots of negative things in the news, sometimes you can find those pockets of groups that are speaking up and causing change,” Jablonski said. “They’re little glimmers of hope.”

-Megan Deane

Artwork by Madison Hoppler



B E E K E E P E R S



As thousands of bees buzz around their hives, guarding their queen and their food, beekeepers are not fazed by them. Beekeepers have a deal with their bees: beekeepers provide shelter and take care of the bees when they need to, and the bees pollinate the surrounding flowers and gardens and give their extra honey to the beekeepers.

Beekeepers provide a safe place for bees and their hives. By having bees, there are many benefits; they help agriculture and wildlife, provide local honey, and increase the overall bee population. This not only helps the beekeepers, but it also positively affects the community because the bees provide these benefits. There are many beekeeping associations that share knowledge on bees and beekeeping throughout New England. There is a lot to learn about beekeeping, but also a lot to learn from the bees themselves.

The process of taking care of bees requires thorough knowledge although bees are very self-sufficient. Spencer Lovette is the President of Merrimack Valley Beekeepers Association, a group of around 240 beekeepers from central Massachusetts to northern New Hampshire. Lovette has been a beekeeper for about seven years and has six hives in his backyard. Lovette said since he started beekeeping, his bees have had a positive impact on his neighbors and the farms near his house. He mentioned that bees circulate within a 5 mile radius and that even in a rural area, his bees still pollinate neighboring gardens. “That’s a very, very large area that my bees are pollinating. So the community definitely benefits from that, not only my garden but also my neighbors’ gardens, and down the street is Fitch’s Farm and they have bee hives there as well. I’m sure my bees are living among their bees and plants and helping themselves and pollinating their vegetables,” he said.

Bees are a major contributor to agriculture, mostly because of their ability to pollinate. Julie Kelley, a member of the Merrimack Valley Beekeepers Association, is owner of Tewksbury

Honey, a family operated farm that has over 8 million bees in 100 to 120 hives. Kelley said, “honey bees pollinate 33% of our food crops, 100% of the almond crop, 90% of the apple, broccoli, blueberry, and onion crops, 80% of the cherry crop, and so much more.”

Another benefit to having bees is the honey that they produce, an essential food source for bees, and something that some beekeepers harvest. Thomas Hausmann, Spanish teacher at ORHS, has been a beekeeper since 1988 when he learned beekeeping in the Peace Corps. He currently has one hive at his house and four hives at a friend’s house nearby and jars the honey from his hives.

Hausmann said that by eating local honey, you can avoid or lower how much processed sugars you intake. By eating local honey, you also consume both the honey and pollen and that allows you to build a tolerance for local pollen, which is a common allergen.

Lovette said, “local honey is better for you than store bought honey that comes from a different location because bees make the honey from local pollen and nectar which have certain allergens in them. So by eating local honey, it will improve your immune system to local allergens. People who are highly allergic [to pollen] will very much like to have local honey because it helps to clear up their allergens. So when you go to the store and buy honey from Indiana, you’re not doing as much good for your immune system if you buy honey locally.”

Bees face many struggles with contracting illnesses and viruses. They encounter viruses and diseases through contact with other colonies of bees. Hausmann said that since almond growers rely heavily on bees to pollinate their almonds, they pay commercial beekeepers from all over the country to come to their orchards.

“[Almond growers] pay the commercial beekeepers a handsome sum for each hive they can put into the orchards and pol-

linate. So you have basically 60% of the bees in the United States in California during February pollinating almonds, they all mix together, they share diseases, they take those diseases and bring the bees back home and bring those diseases back and spread those diseases and it's all because of almonds. If you're a commercial beekeeper, it's hard to turn down the excellent money you'd get paid by almond growers," said Hausmann.

Bees also get diseases from mites, who are one of the biggest threats to bees. Mites can take over a whole colony of bees if they are too quick for the bees to stop. According to Lovette, mites eat holes through the exoskeleton of bee larva that never heal, so once they develop, they get countless infections and viruses from what the mites have done to them. "It'd be like if you had a dinner-plate-sized hole in your abdomen and your guts are exposed, and the result of that is you're going to catch all these diseases and viruses. So the mites don't really kill the bees, but the mites disable the bees by perforating them and they get sick from whatever is around. If the mites multiply too much, then the whole colony dies off, or they might starve because they don't have enough food," said Lovette.

Beekeepers can help prevent or mitigate the mites in a hive by checking on them regularly to make sure that if there is a mite population in the hive, it stays low.

A much larger predator to bees that beekeepers prepare for is skunks and racoons. Hausmann said that he puts a fence around his hives so if a skunk or racoon were to attack the hive, they would need to expose their abdomen which is a very sensitive spot. By making this part vulnerable, the bees would sting them in the abdominal region and drive the predators away. If preventing bears from attacking the bees, the beekeeper would set up an electric fence to deter them from going to the hives.

Apart from local benefits and how much bees help humans, bees need some help from beekeepers. "There's not much that prevents people from [beekeeping] other than you have to know how to do it [...] If they wanted to give it a shot, then there are



clubs like ours that make it easier to go into beekeeping," said Lovette. Some of these clubs include Maine Beekeepers Association, which Hausmann is a part of, and many other groups that create communities that share information and tips on how to protect bees, take care of them, and make hives.

Lovette, Hausmann, and Kelley all agreed that more people should join the beekeeping party. "The more the merrier. We started with just 2 hives, and it was super fun. It got a little out of control, and now we have more than 100, but a couple hives isn't too much work," said Kelley.

Hausmann said, "I think everyone should have a beehive in their yard." He went on to say that having a beehive would help educate people on the different species of bees like carpenter, bumble, and honey bees, most beekeepers have honey bees. Hausmann added that people would also learn overall bee behavior and that bees are not something to be afraid of. Lovette wants people to become beekeepers purely for the fun of it all. "It would be good for our environment and good for society, but I wouldn't go and tell people to keep bees for that reason. You should keep bees because it's fun and rewarding. It's one of those rare things where it's fun to do and it's good for you," said Lovette. **M**



-Ari Antonelli

Photos by Arthur F. Rounds at Lovette's backyard

Creating Cultural Exchange Without Travel



Last spring, trips to Tanzania, New York City, England, and France and Spain were canceled last minute due to COVID-19. Unfortunately, the pandemic continues to put a halt on all travel for the time being, which has caused teachers to turn to unconventional ways to keep aspects of cultural exchange present in their virtual classrooms.

With this in mind, I was able to sit down with three ORHS teachers and found one common theme that came up: learning about other cultures and collaborating with people different than us will always be important, even if we can't physically be in that new place. These teachers are focusing on incorporating some of these cultural elements we would experience when traveling by working with others in different parts of the world virtually and creating specific lessons and projects that expose students to other cultures.

Jenna Benoit ('21), who was planning on traveling to Tanzania for her second time with ORHS, has realized the importance of learning about new cultures in our country today. "I think there's always room for learning and there's always room for empathy. People just need to be more open minded. In today's world there's a lot of hate and there's a lot of anger towards people who aren't white and American. People tend to be really close minded to the thought of different people with different lives all around the world and I think that it's important to learn those different lives."

Many ORHS teachers have been lucky enough to experience those different cultures in person with ORHS students. Spanish teacher Wendy Gibson has traveled to Spain and Puerto Rico with ORHS students and Barb Milliken, ORHS French teacher, has been taking groups of students to France, Spain, and Canada since 2005.

Similarly, Dave Ervin, music teacher at ORHS, said, "I've been taking bands to different places every single year for twenty five years, up until 2020." From Burlington

VT, to Disney World, and China, travel is a big part of how Ervin brings music to different groups of people.

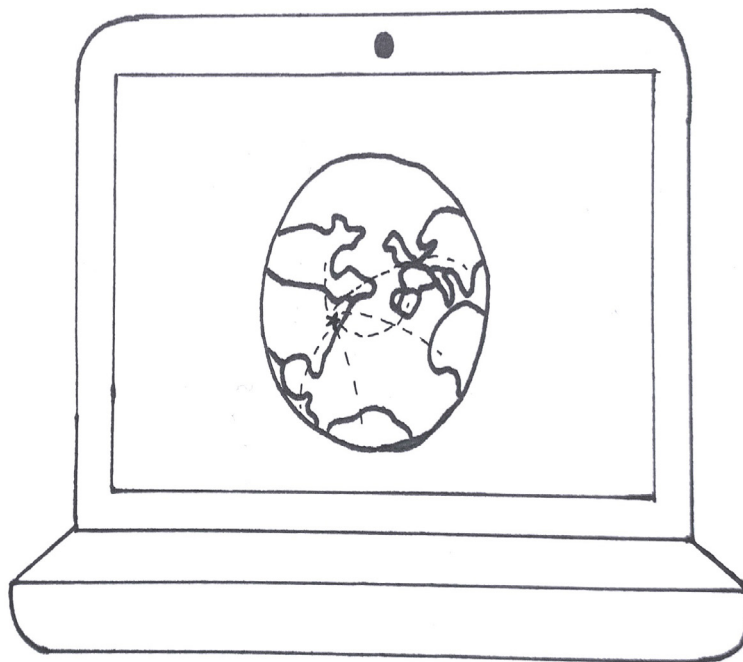
Ervin was planning on traveling with members of the high school band to New York City last April to perform at the Lincoln Center with trumpet extraordinaire, Jay Daly. Like all other trips last spring, the New York trip was canceled. However, Ervin is still working with Daly virtually after being inspired by the recent take off of the Black Lives Matter movement. "I really hoped to find a way to find a way to link [the band] up with some black artists and other people from different parts of the world with different viewpoints this year. I knew that was something we could do over Zoom, even though in person is better for everything," said Ervin.

Based on his work with Ervin, Daly actually formed a company last spring with the intent of "creating partnerships with artists from around the country to work with high school students and give them opportunities and partnerships that they might not have," explained Ervin.

One of these partnerships is with jazz singer Carmen Bradford, who sang with the Count Basie Orchestra, a jazz band that rose to fame in the 50s and 60s, and even had collaborations with singers Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald. "We still miss that connection with people that is incredible that happens with

travel, but we're trying to make up for it with things like this interaction that we are going to get with Carmen Bradford," said Ervin.

Similar to Ervin, Milliken was also inspired by the current events in the United States to compare our culture to others around the world, and found that a big aspect of cultural exchange comes from learning about how other countries deal with bigger issues. "My next unit will be one on racism, because that is something that is such a huge issue for us right now in our own country, and instead of focusing on racism within the United States, we're going to look at racism



in all of the countries that have been colonized by the French,” she said.

Although travel can not happen this year, teachers like Gibson have been inspired to incorporate different celebrations, including Hispanic Heritage month, which was September 15 to October 15, into their curriculum. “In Spanish 4, they did a biography project for the Hispanic Heritage month, to just realize there have been some amazing contributions from Hispanic people in our country and in the world.”

Additionally, one project that Gibson felt was a success last spring was one she did with her Spanish 3 students. “I chose different cool places in the Spanish speaking world. I had videos that they watched, I had them do some readings, and the summative at the end was them telling me where they wanted to go and why.” Even though her students weren’t able to actually travel to the country of their choice, Gibson still found that projects like this expose students to different cultures similar to actually traveling there.

Milliken is also working on projects where students are

skulls background in Teams that represented De Los Muertos, so we were talking about what those things were behind me,” she said.

While upset that traveling is not an option, one ORHS class that Benoit recommended to further explore some of those cultural elements remotely was Sociology, “which is basically learning about human connection and human response and how people work with each other. That class was a really nice class to take that helped me figure out psychologically what was going on between groups of people and things like that,” explained Benoit.


Despite the lack of travel, being remote poses a whole new challenge for teachers to find enough time to teach about different cultures. “I’m finding that the day goes so fast and I’m finding that a lot of times this is what gets left. I’m working on something else with them and I need to get enough assessments in because we have a really short quarter. I feel like I need to do better, whether we are remote or not, I need to add more,” said Gibson.

“People tend to be really close minded to the thought of different people with different lives all around the world and I think that it’s important to learn those different lives.”

learning about specific countries. “Right now, with my [French 5 students], we are doing families in [French speaking] countries, where every student has a country that they’re following, and they’re doing presentations on what does the institution of marriage look like on this country. We have talked about polygamy and homosexual marriage and all these different type of things, but they’re getting to it by exploring a different country and presenting their findings to the class, which opens everyone’s eyes,” Milliken explained.

One long term project that Milliken is working on this year is collaborating with former ORHS student, Erika Ireland (‘15), who is working in a classroom in Lyon, France this year. The goal is to have Milliken’s French students write to Ireland’s students in French, and then the French students would respond in English. Students will have the flexibility to ask the French students about their lives and directly learn about the other culture that way.

While these bigger projects are fun and important, Gibson explained that some of the most helpful things don’t take a lot of planning. “It’s a lot of little things, like today I had a sugar

As much as Milliken would want to travel to Europe this year, she hopes that our current reliance on technology will allow us to have these opportunities more accessible to all in the future and that students will be able to experience these other cultures one way or another. “Honestly, the one to one with technology makes that easier because you can travel there virtually and we have to embrace that that’s an opportunity. I’m hoping that it will become much more commonplace in a lot of our curriculum.” 

- Emily Hamilton
Artwork by Dora Bowden

Get Out

What going outside can do for our physical and mental health

I had been sitting at my desk staring at my computer since 8:15 am. After working all day, I was unable to concentrate. This left me feeling stressed that I wouldn't be able to complete all of my assignments on time. It was then that I realized I was being so unproductive that I needed to take a break and go on a walk outside. During my walk, I noticed all of the fall colors, and didn't even think about all of the things going on back at my desk. Once I got back from the 20 minute walk down my road, I felt as though I had pressed a reset button and all of that stress and inability to focus was no longer there.

Because COVID-19 has forced many things to go remote, we are now forced to spend a lot of time in front of screens to get our work done, go to school, and even to socialize. Nowadays, it is especially important to take breaks from our screens and spend time outside. Getting that time in nature is necessary to help both our physical and mental health during this time.

According to "Ecopsychology: How Immersion in Nature Benefits Your Health" by Yale Environment 360, it only takes a minimum of 120 minutes spent outside per week to feel healthy and have a strong sense of well being. This could be less than 20 minutes every day, or all 120 minutes in one day and you would still feel those benefits. Many people have found it hard to get

"Mentally I definitely feel more relaxed. I've always liked the outdoors since I was a young kid, so it's always been a place I go to escape, get away from things, get away from my phone, and I think it's very therapeutic."

even 120 minutes in a week. This is why this is more important now more than ever to be aware of these benefits, and schedule time for this into our day.

Social isolation has become much more prevalent with all of what is happening right now. According to local psychologist Dr. Hadassah Ramsay, she has seen an increase in depression, anxiety, and social isolation. "We are human beings and for the most part we're social beings, and there's a continuum. Some people are very outgoing and extroverted, and some people are introverted, but everyone has social needs, and getting those met is an important piece of mental health and our wellbeing," said Ramsay. A safer way that we can get those needs met includes gathering outside.

I myself have felt very isolated and find that now I only connect with a fraction of the people that I would normally see in school. I would say that I have felt much more distant, even with my closest friends, and have only been able to see a few of them. It has become more evident now how beneficial spending time outside is. Being able to go outside and hang out with these people has allowed me to meet my social needs in a safe way. A few ways I like to do this are by playing high school sports, going on walks, and having socially distant picnics.

All of us need social interaction, and although some of that can be over social media, there needs to be a balance, which is something Ramsay stresses. "Generally what I say in terms of mental health, is that a balance is always important. It's not bad to sit in front of a screen, but it needs to be in a balanced way, because too much of anything is just not a good idea," said Ramsay.

Along with social benefits, there are many mental benefits of getting time outside. According to "11 Reasons you Should go Outside" by *Business Insider*, getting into nature can help with stress relief, mental energy, concentration, and sharper thinking. This is because when you are stressed your body releases a hormone called cortisol. When you are immersed in nature, this hormone, along with your heart rate, is lowered.



Along with lowering stress, going outside allows you to relax, lowers anxiety, and improves overall mood, according to “Why being outside is good for your mental health” by Lumino Health. Right now, it is so easy to get lost in what is going on in the world and in our lives. It is so important to find time where we can fully disconnect with the world around us and get back in tune with ourselves by spending time outside.

It is so easy to just be sedentary in front of a screen all day. I myself have experienced this after working on schoolwork. I sometimes find myself sitting and watching a show or some YouTube videos. That’s because it is the easiest option, and I’m already there, which is an issue. There needs to be some motivation and planning involved to actually get up and do something healthy for my body. School counselor Kim Sekera noticed this in her family as well. “It doesn’t take any energy and it’s easy because you are already there anyhow. But it’s how you force yourself to say it is in my best interest to take a break and go for a walk because then you will be more engaged,” she said.

The hardest part is being able to force yourself to step away and have that break. That motivation is what so many people struggle with, but Dr. Ramsay has a solution for this. “One big thing I recommend for my clients is that they get very intentional with how they spend their day so that they become aware of the responsibilities that they have for work or school, and then before the day begins, figure out where they’re gonna take their breaks and then commit to getting outside and having a change of environment.” I have found that if I actually block that time out of my day then I’m much more likely to spend time outside. Once I block that out, I find that it is much easier to motivate myself to get up and do something healthy. If I can get outside in a day and maybe even get some exercise, I find that I am able to concentrate more, I feel more productive, and overall just more relaxed. Vinny Golden (‘21) has experienced similar things. “Mentally, I definitely feel



more relaxed. I’ve always liked the outdoors since I was a young kid, so it’s always been a place I go to escape, get away from things, get away from my phone, and I think it’s very therapeutic,” he said.

There are many easy ways to get outside, whether that is going for a walk, a bike ride, or just sitting. “You don’t have to have gear. Just going for a walk is really nice and still very healthy,” said Sekera.

Some prefer other activities that require some equipment. “Surfing is a big one for me. It really takes me away from the screen entirely. You can go hiking in the middle of nowhere and people will still be connected, whereas with surfing no one is out there with a phone and everyone’s disconnected with everything and just hanging out,” said Golden.

Whether you have gear or not, a smart thing to do is to have some sort of menu of activities to provide options. “That diversity really helps with motivation, it keeps it interesting, it keeps it fun, and it keeps it different,” said Ramsay.

Now that it is getting colder and transitioning into winter, it will be harder to find things to do outside. You may even lose that motivation to go outside like you do when it’s a nice, sunny, fall day out. But it is still just as important for both your physical and mental health. Although your activities may be limited, there are still many easy ways to go outside such as going for a walk, a run, ice skating, taking pictures, and many different snow activities. I urge everyone to get this time outside in order to be more present for other aspects of our lives. Sekera said, “I think it should have the same importance as attending class. Students should carve going outside into their schedule the same way they are for attending classes.”

M

-Ethan Wilson



WHY TO TAKE REMOTE LEARNING SERIOUSLY

To give my eyes a break from my phone, I look up to the clock ahead and check the time. "11:27 pm." Shoot. I look back down, this time at my agenda book, and see all the assignments due the following day. Crap. I then check Powerschool to see if I can get away with turning the assignments in late without it affecting my grade too much. My heart pounds as the page refreshes and I aggressively tap my foot against the floor. Nope. Most definitely not. Regretting not taking remote learning more seriously, I make my way downstairs to make some coffee, as I will surely be up for the rest of the night.

Calling last spring's remote learning confusing and hectic would surely be an understatement. The quick transition into a new form of learning caught students and teachers off guard. It resulted in many students doing poorly due to the lack of communication, and feeling unmotivated because they were in the comfort of their own homes. On the other hand, the students who took remote learning just as seriously as normal school were successful. To address the academic issues some students are facing, they should be taking it more seriously, and they can learn how from their peers.

During remote learning, it's easy to not be focusing on school as much as usual. There's an increase in distractions and a lack of motivation as we are surrounded by family. However, it is important to still keep up with school because it's still happening, just not how we are used to. If students dedicate themselves to remote learning, they'll likely be more successful when Oyster River returns to in-person learning.

A part of that dedication includes staying up to date on school work, and teachers stress the importance of this. Classes, such as math, build upon each other, and neglecting work right now can put you in a stressful position in the future. Using Calculus as an example, math teacher Lisa Hallbach states, "The calculus curriculum doesn't change, so the precalculus students this year still need to know the same material regard-



less of whether we are in the building or [in] a remote setting," Halbach's statement applies to all classes. It's crucial to understand every chapter or lesson in order to move onto the next.

Looking back at last spring's remote learning, I barely watched the video lessons for my classes, especially math. I would do well on the formative assignments, but when test days came around, I found myself struggling. I realized that if I didn't understand even one lesson in the chapter, I couldn't understand the other lessons either.

This experience taught me that Halbach's statement about how class materials build upon each other is accurate. Once I started paying more attention in class and keeping up with vid-

eo lessons, I found that I was more successful in the class. Simply taking the time to understand material allowed me to take remote learning more seriously.

Another predicament of an online setting is that it's difficult for teachers to tell whether students are being academically faithful. I've heard about many people who have taken advantage of the remote setting to cheat on tests. However, it is important they recognize that it will negatively impact them later. Cheating is another factor that causes students to not fully grasp a concept in a class. There have been many times during remote learning where I was tempted to glance over at my notes during a test or quiz, but I knew that it would only hurt me in the end. To avoid being in a position where I felt the need to cheat, I started preparing better for tests and quizzes.

According to the article "8 Astonishing Stats on Academic Cheating" from *Open Education Database*, about 83.5% of students regret cheating on tests. Like those students, the people who are cheating on the remote tests and quizzes at ORHS will most likely regret their decision as well. They will have a disadvantage once we go back to a classroom setting if they didn't actually learn

the material they should have understood.

Most often, students feel the need to cheat because they were unmotivated to prepare for the test in the first place. However, remote learning caused students to have a difficult time staying

procrastination, staying organized was difficult for many people including me. However, it can be beneficial to being successful in remote learning. For example, I had a hard time keeping track of assignments which led me to turning things in late. I would also

“You still need to know the same material regardless of whether we are in the school or remote setting.”

motivated, as turning off their cameras and microphones is an option in this learning environment. According to Lucy Picard (‘23) “it is so easy to get distracted because you can go on your phone in class without teachers knowing, unlike normal school.”

Teachers understand that staying engaged in class is something students struggle with. Social Studies teacher David Hawley emphasizes that turning cameras on will help you pay attention in class. Hawley states, “If they are multitasking and have their cameras off, they might not have the full direction of where the class is going.” He continues explaining that turning your mics on and chiming in during class is also a good way to stay connected.

As Hawley mentioned, whenever I have my camera on in my classes, I am not only understanding what is happening in class, but also enjoying it more. Everyone in the class, including the teacher, being able to see me forced me to stay off my phone in case there would be consequences for it. Seeing everyone’s faces and having everyone see you also makes remote learning feel more like a normal classroom setting too.

Outside of class, many students feel that their phones are also a big distraction to their learning. Matteo Currucio (‘22), a National Honor Society student, explains that it is easy for him to just scroll through his social media feeds, eat snacks, and basically do anything but his homework. However, he recently made an effort to battle the distraction, stating, “I tried keeping my phone outside of my room and that definitely helps me procrastinate less.”

Similar to Carrucio’s method, I also keep my phone either on the other side of my room or not in my room at all. This has helped me focus on the assignment without checking my phone every couple minutes. Another strategy I use is setting timers. I set a timer for thirty minutes and work for that whole time. After the thirty minutes is complete, I set another timer for five minutes to check my phone. This has helped me not only get my work done, but has helped me stay focused for longer periods of time.

Like over-

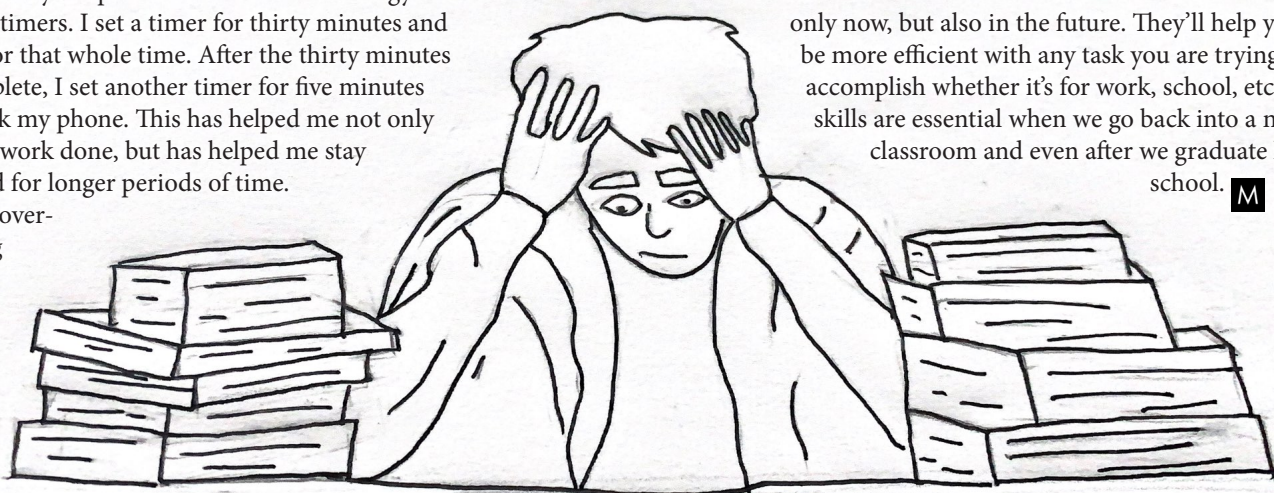
come, receive several emails every day because it was the only way of communicating with teachers. The large amount of emails I was receiving led to important ones from teachers getting lost in my inbox and disrupted the communication. However, I turned this negative experience into a learning opportunity. I learned to stay organized by checking my emails more often. I started keeping my mail tab open on my laptop so that if I get an email, my laptop gives me a notification. This notification helped me remember to read the email.

Remembering what times classes were happening was also a problem for me. Oftentimes, I would get side tracked and forget I had a meeting. I would go into the meeting late and miss out on important info which negatively impacted me when doing assignments. Lydia Kurtiak (‘21) explains that towards the end of remote learning in the spring, she realized having a set schedule helped her succeed in school. She said, “I made my schedule strict so that I have to do homework at this time and school meetings at another. A set schedule also forced me to be more productive.”

Like Kurtiak, I also set up a schedule and wrote down times my classes started. Our brains can only remember so much and writing down everything had a large role in making my education easier. I invested in an organized agenda book with lots of space. I wrote down my homework in each class as soon as it was assigned. This has helped me keep track of what assignments I have to do and when they are due.

Remote learning is so strange to all of us, but it’s important to take it seriously. There’s also so much we have learned from it!

Staying organized, fighting distractions, and paying attention in class will all lead us to become better students not only now, but also in the future. They’ll help you to be more efficient with any task you are trying to accomplish whether it’s for work, school, etc. These skills are essential when we go back into a normal classroom and even after we graduate high school. M



-Bhavana Muppala
Art by Emily Jackman

Is *the* Best *Your* Best?

At crew practice recently, we did a practice regatta on the water in singles. It was back and forth between me and another girl in my group the whole time, and at the end of the race, I fell just short of beating her. I was frustrated at myself because I wanted my bow to propel just past hers, and that was my goal the entire race. I wanted to be the best on the water that day. In the moment I didn't think anything of this mindset, and didn't realize it had held me back until I was listening to a podcast after practice.

I was listening to Armchair Expert with Dax Shepard. That episode, Tom Brady was being interviewed about his life and career, and he brought up a point that really made me think. He said, "I said to my kids the other day, is it most important to do your best or is it more important to do the best. What's going to be more fulfilling for you in your life?"

In our lives we are so focused on always being the best. That day at practice, if I had focused on doing my best, I would have been proud of myself, instead of disappointed, because I had done the best I could for that day. Whether it's regarding academics, athletics, or extracurriculars, we often find ourselves striving to be the best. We can find an inherent aspect of competitiveness in pretty much everything. We all have tendencies to want to be the best at whatever it is we are doing; it's human nature. This desire to be the best gets in the way of seeing how far we have come since we started learning a new concept in school, a sport, or whatever it may be for you. So, what would happen if we all tried to focus on doing our best instead of doing the best?

We should stop basing our success off of others'. Our work becomes about topping others' best and not pursuing your best, and while doing this, you will struggle to be content. If you are just comparing yourself to others, that's all you focus on, and might stop, and you limit your potential once you're barely ahead. Brady said, "if the goal is to be as good as someone else or marginally better, then it's finite, as opposed to if I'm bettering myself, who knows where this goes." I understand that being the best is subjective and could mean a different thing for everyone. It's about what being the best means for you in various areas of your life, and how that could differ from what your best is. "The whole phrase "doing your best" is different for everyone, but your potential for success is unmeasurable. It's how much you put into it," shared Alana Eisenberg ('21).

Some people might just want to be the best and don't care about doing their best, and maybe they're the same thing for them. If you're someone who values personal growth, you may

want to consider a shift in mindset. I believe it can be healthy, and helpful, to focus on doing our best versus doing the best.

As an alternative to competing with others, we can compete with ourselves, and strive to improve to beat our personal best. If we do this, we will be proud of our improvement, no matter how big or small it may be. In order to be the best, comparison with others is required. In order to do your best, competition can be avoided altogether, and has no chance of holding us back. It's evident that competition can be very helpful for some. Competition can be a great driving force to get to a certain level, but should not be a sole focus. "I don't think there's anything wrong with wanting to be the best at something. People are inherently competitive. There's a certain level of healthiness when we compete in a way that's beneficial for ourselves. When you do it at the exclusion of trying to learn something or cutting a corner, then it becomes problematic," said Dave Hawley, ORHS Psychology teacher.

Where I see this concept being very relevant in my life is in academics, and this is where I think many people, including myself, can improve their mindset. Always wanting to get the best grade in the class, or get a better grade than a certain student in your class, fosters a sense of just caring about grades rather than the learning. I'm guilty of this too, and have caught myself caring more about the grades than the actual material I'm being evaluated on.

Looking back on my motivations for doing well academically, I was motivating myself to be the best and not do my best a lot of the time. After realizing that doing your best is more valuable, I began to stop caring, or asking, how others did

on their assignments. This has proven to be helpful for me, and I am focusing more on just doing my best, and along with that am retaining more information. If I know I did my best, I now have found even if it wasn't quite the grade I wanted, I was happy because I did everything I could. I've felt much less stress around grades with this mindset. Part of this might be that I'm in a remote setting right now. There isn't the same culture of sitting in class while everyone gets their tests handed back and then comparing, which has been one benefit of remote learning. When, and if, we are back in person I will strive to carry this mindset with me.

However, it's a hard change to make. "[Wanting to be the best] is competitive nature. You can't really help it. Even if you hear someone did better, even if you don't consider yourself competitive, there's still a little part of you that's either 'oh I got a cou-



ple points higher' or 'I got a couple points lower,' said Eisenberg. In the past for me, it hasn't been about beating a peer. To me, being the best would be getting close to a 100, or getting an A. After getting a grade that wasn't what I wanted, I would often discredit the work I was once proud to submit, and am hard on myself, because it wasn't the best grade for my standards.

"In some areas like academically, [if my best wasn't the best] it would be like 'wow I kind of stink.' But if it's things that I don't really care about, I'm like 'well, it's fine,'" said Hazel Stasko ('24). When this happens, self-confidence can plummet and a negative association with an experience prevents us from wanting to try again.

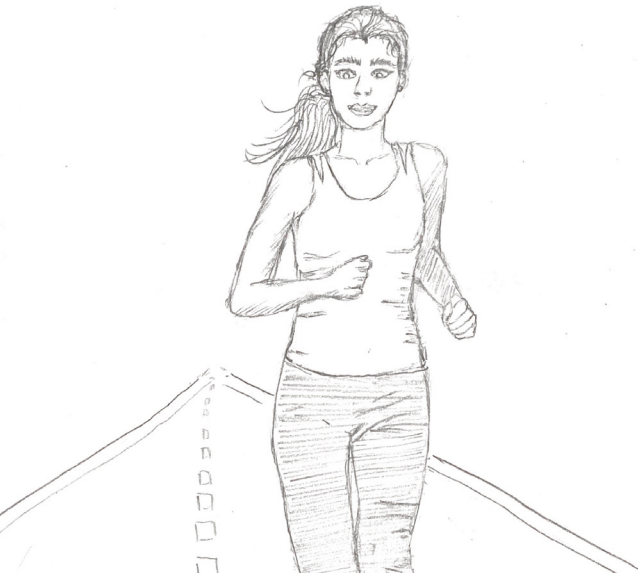
Sometimes, we do the best we possibly can, but a lot of your peers maybe got a few points higher, so you didn't do the best. "If you use the highest grade in the class as your goal, you actually might miss a lot of things. One of the challenges of grades, competencies, or whatever we're navigating, is that they always can be worked. If you focus on cultivating

el of confidence and security to be okay with not being the best.

This reality of not being the best can be a hard pill to swallow, since we've been conditioned to want that. To help this, have the reason you're striving to improve be for yourself, and not because of anyone else. Motivate yourself from within. "For a while I would get

really discouraged or just kind of write it off [if my best wasn't the best], but I think with junior and senior year, as time went on, anything's really possible so I just pushed myself more. Not necessarily because it was a competition, but it was more so just like 'I know I can do better,'" said Eisenberg. While this concept is fairly new to me too, and I have not mastered it at all, I feel this shift in mindset has begun to help me academically. I can focus on myself, and comprehending the material, and be okay if my best wasn't as best as someone else's. We are all different and have unique skill sets so there is no use in comparing ourselves so heavily to one another's achievements.

A good way to achieve this shift in mindset comes down to being super aware of your personal expectations and goals. Have goals that are completely individual, and not tied to anyone else. For example, "I want to really learn



“The whole phrase “doing your best” is different for everyone, but your potential for success is unmeasurable. It’s how much you put into it.”

your own personal set of expectations for yourself, and producing the best work that you can, you're less inclined to navigate that world through gaming it, and rather, engaging in it," said Hawley.

Us high school seniors will also feel the impacts of a new set of comparisons when people start sharing where they'll be going to college. "It's hard because with social media, you also can see where people are going to colleges or you see all this data on the different types of people that got in. Suddenly, you're not worried about doing your best. You're trying to make your best match that person's best because it's what worked for them," said Eisenberg.

Not being able to get into the best college, have the highest GPA, or get an A can lead to stress and anxiety. "There's been a significant increase in anxiety as a result of not meeting the expectations [students] see in front of them. And they're not expectations set up by [teachers]. They're expectations set up by their friends and the algorithm that they partake in," said Hawley. I agree with what Hawley said. It's not coming from the teachers. We, as students, put unnecessary pressure on ourselves, and each other, to get the best grades. A lot of this can come down to confidence. You have to have a certain lev-

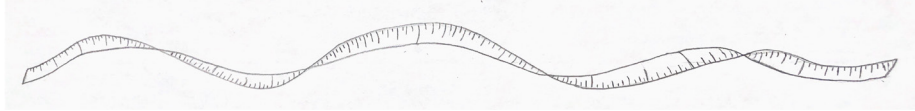
this material, and know it inside and out." Make sure you prepare yourself ahead of time to actively shift your mindset when about to receive a grade. Remind yourself of the preparation you did, how you felt it went, and then base your reaction off of that, but not off of another person's success. That is what focusing on doing your best looks like. Changing your mindset on this won't happen overnight, and it's unlikely that in all areas of your life you'll be able to completely focus on just doing your best, but just try it. To take some of the pressure off of yourself and to potentially see more success, make an effort to avoid basing your success off others'. It inadvertently places limits on your personal success. Try being competitive with yourself. You could be selling yourself, and your potential, short, and might not know it. **M**

-Holly Reid
Images by Sofia Testa

One Size Fits Few

It looked so flattering on the model in the window.

But here, as she struggled to guide her arms through the tight-fitting fabric and stretch it over her bust and torso, she wondered if the model had exerted the same effort she did to put it on. Exhausted, she studied her reflection in the dressing room's fluorescent lighting. Her arms seemed to fit just a bit too snug in the sleeves, the bulk of her stomach awkwardly pulled at the fabric, and the skin on her back spilled slightly over the tight hem. *I thought one size was supposed to fit everyone. Is there something wrong with me?* She pinched the skin on her stomach hard between her fingers, wishing that would make it disappear so she could look like the model in the window.



Unfortunately, this scene is a reality for many teenagers who try on clothes with the claim that “one size fits all.” Companies such as Brandy Melville and Pacsun are notorious for branding their tiny, tight-fitting clothes this way, which markets that body standard as ideal to the targeted consumer of highschoolers. These clothing businesses glorify a specific body type and brand it as “average,” which is not only inaccurate, but harmful and exclusive to teens. PacSun, in particular, often displays their brand clothing on skinny, tall models- which doesn't translate well to many other body types. The unrealistic concept of “one size fits all” can greatly influence a woman's body image, self-confidence, and security, which is the main reason why stores that brand their clothing in this way need to look to change their sizing methods. We, as consumers, should take responsibility to spend our money at other businesses that promote healthy body image and positivity.

My first real experience where I became conscious of my body shape was during the early years of middle school, when I began to gravitate towards the popular clothing companies of Hollister and Brandy Melville. I distinctly remember how upset I was in that dressing room, wondering why the petite clothes didn't accommodate my broad shoulders or curves- because that one size was made to fit everyone, right? I truly believed that there was something wrong with my body, that I should try to diet or exercise more simply because of a label on a tag.

The reality is that no article of clothing will fit every body shape comfortably since every body is naturally different. It's absurd to think that a single size can accommodate for so many diverse qualities, yet many companies like Brandy Melville try to market their product with the claim that it can. This company is the most frustrating to me because they advertise their sweatpants and jeans with 22"-24" waists as “one size fits all,” but according

to “What is the Average Waist Size for Women?” from *Healthline*, the average waist size for teen girls in the United States is 32.6.” This store's contortion of sizing is harmful to girls who might believe that they aren't slim enough because they equate “average” and “normal” with the branded concept of “one size fits all.”

“It's really demoralizing for girls, especially at a young age,” said Tess Parrott ('22). Parrott continued to explain that it just takes one negative experience with this concept of “one size fits all” to change a teenager's perspective on his or her body. In this generation where physical appearance seems to hold so much value to teenagers, this concept can be particularly damaging to younger girls who are still developing an image of themselves.

“It makes me so sad when I hear middle schoolers saying that they need to diet because they just don't understand that they're still growing and changing,” said Ella Orchard-Blowen ('22).

Many girls at this age are too young to appreciate that when clothing branded as “one size fits all” doesn't fit correctly, it's just an issue in sizing. At 16, I accept that I have an athletic figure whereas many of my peers can fit comfortably into smaller clothing, simply because they are built differently than I am. Even if we maintained the same diet and exercise routine, we would all still have different bodies because of our genetics. However, many girls in both high school and middle school don't fully understand this. This is such

an important and prevalent issue in body image, and clothing stores need to understand how their branding actually affects their consumers- especially since they are targeting high school and middle school audiences.

To me, the most frustrating part of “one size fits all” clothing is the implicit blame on the consumer. For clothing brands to claim that one size fits all, it prompts someone who doesn't have an “ideal figure” to say, “why don't I fit into this? What's wrong with me?” The *all* part of this concept sends a message that the way it fits is the wearer's fault, not the clothing or label itself. That idea



size fits all” branding can lead to body dysmorphia, which can then prompt eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia. This is because some girls may want so strongly to conform to the standard of beauty that this branding glorifies, which essentially risks their health just to look a certain way. Body dysmorphia is especially common, as it can be so easy to identify flaws when you don’t look exactly like the woman modeling the clothing. As the article, “Does Size Really Matter? Not When it Comes to Clothing,” from *Psychology Today* puts it, “we are driven by numbers: how many calories we consume in a day, how much we weigh on

tal] place.” Jane continued to explain the impact of boycotting companies to influence change, which is one strategy that could potentially pressure “one size fits all” stores like Brandy Melville to change their sizing method to one that is more inclusive.

One size fits all culture does not just apply to adolescents. Adults may experience negative feelings towards their body image if they are unhappy with the way this particular size of clothing fits, as well. Parents are often embraced as role models to their children, so if they are dissatisfied with their body, that may very well reflect onto a daughter’s perspective of herself. I consider

“I had to go through a lot of mental health barriers because of the way I felt about my body,”

a scale, what size dress we wear and how many calories we burned during our exercise regimen- but we often forget to understand that these numbers are driving more and more individuals to engage in unhealthy diets leading to lower self-esteem and the development of eating disorders.”

Depression and other declines in mental health can also develop from this style of branding. Girls may feel social pressure to believe that their appearance defines them and are therefore not good enough if they don’t fit into the “average” body type portrayed in one size fits all clothing.

“I had to go through a lot of mental health barriers because of the way I felt about my body,” said Jane*, “it was really hard to dig myself out of that low... I still just can’t let myself shop at places like PacSun because I don’t want to support [a business] that brings girls to such a hard [men-

myself lucky to have parents that promote body positivity, as it

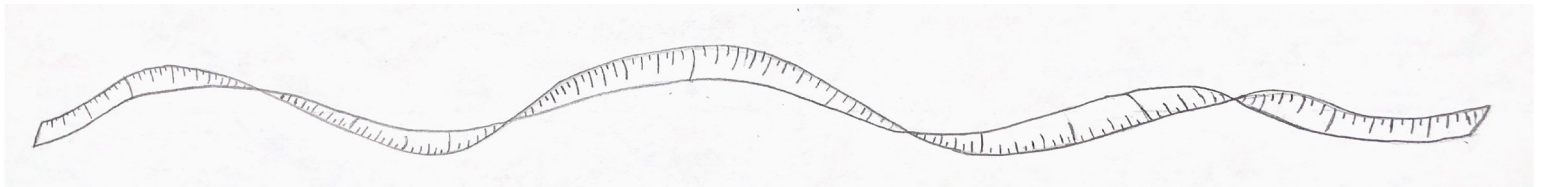
has allowed me to feel more comfortable and confident in my own skin. However, this kind of support does not exist within all families. If stores like PacSun were to eliminate the branding of one size fits all, then both adults and teens may benefit emotionally.

“One size fits all” is an entirely inaccurate form of branding- it does and will not fit everybody. Whether you fit into this label or not, it does not represent your worth since every body is built differently and is beautiful in its own way. Our culture and clothing stores need to accept this concept and change their way of sizing to an all-inclusive method and build an environment that promotes body

positivity for our generation and the next to come. **M**

- Laura Slama

*name changed for anonymity



Fake It Till You Make It

"Being confident seems like such a good feeling and I wish that for everyone."

influencers "fake" having confidence and security and it eventually leads to them gaining real confidence. At first, many people

I was nervous, but deep down I knew gaining confidence began with faking it first. I took a deep breath and ran my fingers through my hair one last time before I made my entrance. With a wide grin, I opened the school doors and walked in with my head held high, ready for my usual A period class. I walked with good posture rather than my usual slouch. I smiled and made strong eye contact at people I passed in the hallways as if I was fully secure. After what felt like forever, I arrived at my class and exhaled. "That wasn't so bad," I thought to myself. I smiled knowing that I was one step closer to gaining real confidence.

In an age where social media and influencers exist, it's common for many of us teenagers to feel insecure about ourselves, whether it's about the way we look, the way we act, or even the things we like. The only way to fight those insecurities is having confidence - even if it means faking that confidence. Eventually, you'll gain the confidence you once dreamed of having.

Confidence is something so many teenagers, including myself, struggle with. We are often anxious to express our thoughts and opinions because we are afraid of judgement from others. So many opportunities, such as joining a club, are lost because we are so worried about what other people will think. It doesn't happen overnight, but when you gain self confidence, it feels like a weight has been lifted from your shoulders.

When I first entered high school I felt so insignificant, but at the same time, I felt like everyone was watching my every move. Until this year, I didn't realize how many important missed opportunities there were my freshman year. I didn't join any clubs, or try to make new friends, and sometimes wouldn't answer questions in class even if I knew the answer. I was so caught up in wondering if people would think of me as a geek or a nerd if I joined certain clubs or participated in class.

I never observed how much this lack of confidence in myself took away from my life until I was introduced to many things I wanted to get involved in. At the end of freshman year, I wanted to join new clubs, meet new people, and learn new things. I knew it was time to change when I realized how many opportunities there were for me and I needed to gain confidence and try something new.

At first I wasn't even sure how to become more confident. Some people can gain their confidence quicker than others. Nonetheless, gaining confidence takes a lot of effort. An article named "When to fake it till you make it" written by Amy Morin from Psychology Today, states "research shows that changing your behavior first can change the way you think and feel." This leads to the concept of "faking it until you make it."

I had seen a lot on social media about how most of the time,



may think this method would be inefficient, because it sounds like you are just hiding your insecurities and putting up a front. Kaila Macmanes ('22) says, "faking confidence is never going to get you that real sense of confidence, in my opinion."

However, Morin states, "faking your confidence isn't about being phony or unauthentic. It is about changing your behavior first and trusting the feelings will follow."

Personally, I feel Morin's statement is accurate. I tried the faking it until you make it method and in just a couple weeks, I already felt more confident. At first, I started by just talking more in class and having people hear my thoughts and ideas. Seeing people react positively gave me a sense of real confidence. It gave me reassurance that my opinions and inputs were valid. After weeks of just participating more in my classes, I felt like I was ready to participate in extracurriculars my freshman year.

The first club I joined was the math team because I had heard good things about it. I had joined the team very late in the year, so everyone already knew each other. I remember feeling nervous because I didn't know everyone on the team that well, but I tried to my best to fake my confidence. I did this by coming to the club prepared, and tried to carry myself well by maintaining good posture and such. And once again, it worked. My fake confidence helped me make friends from the team in just one day. Seeing that I was able to make friends so easily gave me some more real confidence and as each day passed, I felt more and more confident.

“Having confidence is about having faith in yourself.”

The ORHS school psychologist, Hannah Cunningham, explained that she's had to fake her confidence as she is new to the school this year, and also happens to be one of the younger staff members. She stated, “I'm still learning how to advocate for myself, but when I do feel confident or at least fake confident, I feel like my voice is being heard.” She explains that faking her confidence has helped her feel more connected to her work as a psychologist and able to express her ideas more.

Cunningham related faking confidence to the Law of Attraction. She explains that the Law of Attraction is when positive thoughts lead to a positive outcome or negative thoughts lead to a negative outcome. “People think that somehow your thoughts are the type of outcome that happens.” She continued on to say, “having confidence is about having faith in yourself and picturing that positivity and using the fake it until you make it method, will help you gain real confidence.”

With confidence, there's so much you can accomplish. Jayson Blaisdell ('22) stated “I just think it's important to trust yourself, because you need to [trust yourself] before anyone else will.” As someone who always tries to be outspoken, Blaisdell said “[Having confidence] has been so helpful, especially in sports... it allows me to take risks, to reach out, and try new things.”

Soon after I started having real confidence in myself, I noticed myself valuing other people's opinions less. Having confidence helped me make myself a priority and that oth

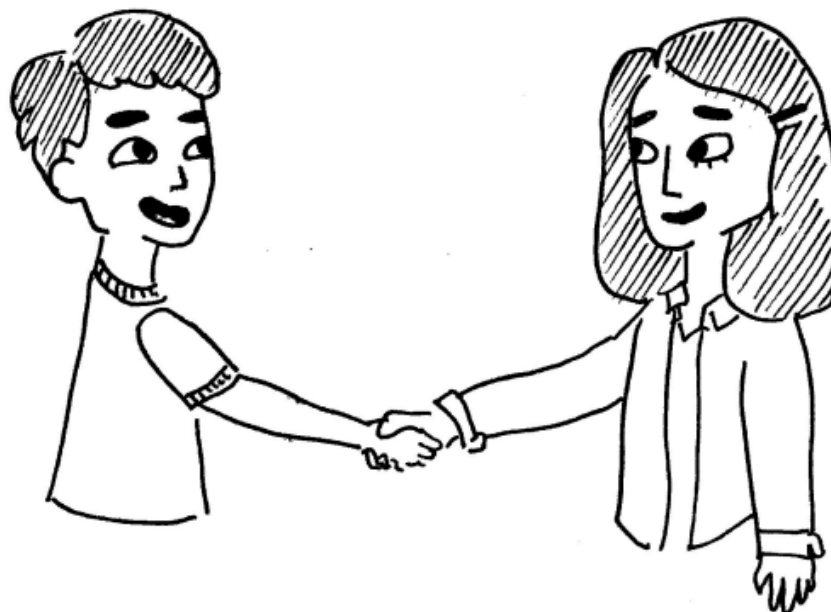
er people's opinions shouldn't affect the way I live because it is my life, not theirs. I learned to value myself and work at becoming the best version of myself. I started joining whatever clubs I wanted, talking to new people, and always trying new things.

Not only has gaining confidence helped me in school activities and such, but it's helped me realize how I should be treated by others. Macmanes stated, “you have to value yourself enough to know how you deserve to be treated in friendships and other relationships.” Macmanes' statement is accurate and gaining self confidence has helped with knowing my worth. Having confidence allowed me to stand up for myself in any friendships or relationships. This is important because no one should ever continuously walk all over you and mistreat you.

“Being confident seems like such a good feeling and I wish that for everyone,” says Macmanes. I fully agree with her. Everyone deserves to feel confident but it's hard to believe in yourself and do what you want, especially when it feels like the world is watching and judging you. A good way you can start is to fake it until you make it. Rather than expressing your insecurities to everyone, act as if you don't have any. Envision the best version of yourself, and you will become it. **M**

-Bhavana Muppala

Artwork by Sofia Sarzosa



Mindfulness Meditation: Why You Should Start Meditating



Lately my mind has been overwhelmingly crowded. With homework, the latest political news, and my personal agenda taking up space in my head, concentrating on any given task has become a challenge. Now more than ever I've needed a way to clear out my headspace.

While I like to occupy my free time with activities such as painting, writing, playing the guitar, and spending time with my friends and family, I've found that the most effective way to ensure that I'm putting my best foot forward when it comes to academics and life in general, is through mindfulness meditation.

Meditation can be defined in many different ways. In simple terms, meditation is the practice of training your attention. According to the popular meditation app, Headspace, "mindfulness is a way of living in which - when we remember - we are able to step back and be in the present moment in any situation. Meditation is the training ground for learning mindfulness. At first, we meditate to become familiar with the here and now for a limited period of time. Over time, however, regularly practicing mindfulness helps us develop the ability to be present throughout the day, every day."

The practice of mindfulness meditation has been known to help people in a plethora of ways. Whatever you're going through, taking a few minutes out of your day to concentrate on yourself and the present moment will benefit you. While meditation won't immediately cure all of your problems, it will help you gain clarity, your your consciousness of negative energy, and approach each situation with a more open mindset. As someone who's experienced a lot of physical and emotional pain in the past few years, and felt the improvements from mindfulness meditation, I can promise you that mindfulness meditation is a practice that you would benefit from implementing in your life.

Meditation can seem quite daunting. At least it did to me when I first started back in my sophomore year of high school. I didn't get how it was possible to not think. As I came to find out, that's not the sole objective of meditation. Judith Moyer, who teaches a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) class, described the objective according to the program. "I learned that MBSR,

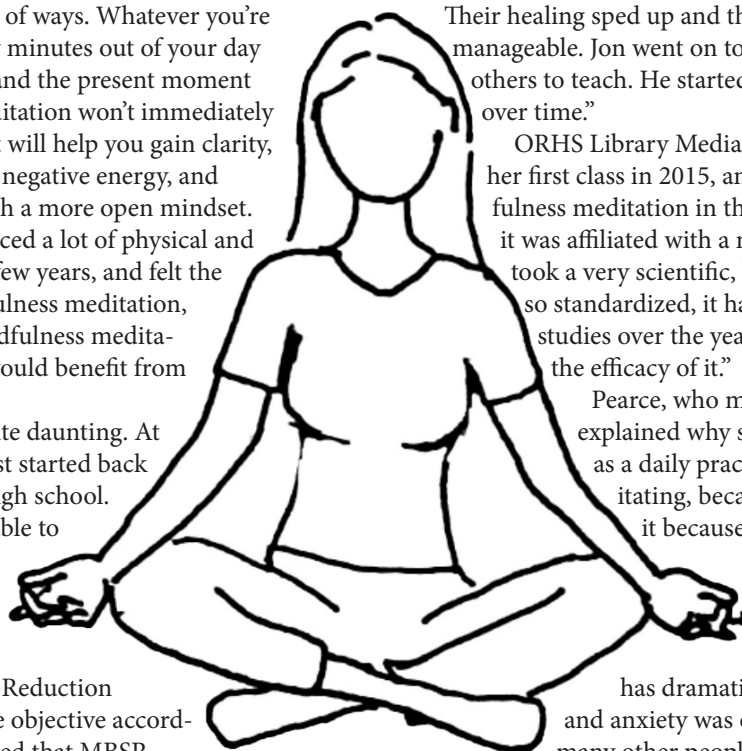
the way that they define it, is paying attention, on purpose or in a particular way, without judgement, and in the present," said Moyer. "These really are life skills." With that in mind, Moyer also explained how there's no one set objective of mindfulness meditation. "The objective depends on the person's intention. My objective as a teacher is to teach skills and to offer ways for that person to apply this to their life," said Moyer. "If they need to reduce their stress levels, I can offer ways to do that. If they need work with their body healing, I can offer ways to do that. There's wide applications, but the person's intention is the important thing."

To get a better understanding of MBSR, I asked Moyer to explain how the program started out, and how it has expanded. She said, "MBSR is a particular program that grew out of Jon Kabat Zinn's work at UMass Medical School. He noticed that in the UMass Medical School facility, there were people there that were having a hard time. Medicine didn't treat their issues. He asked the doctors if they would allow him to offer the early version of MBSR, a class, to people who were at end of life, or suffering from chronic disease, or people who were simply having trouble healing. He taught what became the eight week curriculum of this class. Lo and behold people changed. Their experiences changed. Their healing sped up and the chronic diseases became more manageable. Jon went on to create this curriculum that he taught others to teach. He started in the late 1970s and this developed over time."

ORHS Library Media Specialist Kathleen Pearce, who took her first class in 2015, and began regularly practicing mindfulness meditation in the summer of 2017, added, "because it was affiliated with a medical center, [Jon Kabat Zinn] took a very scientific, brain based approach. Because it's so standardized, it has been used in hundreds of different studies over the years, different medical studies, to test the efficacy of it."

Pearce, who meditates for twenty minutes every day, explained why she continues mindfulness meditation as a daily practice. "I don't do it because I love meditating, because some days it's so frustrating. I do it because I felt the difference in myself."

With everything going on in the world there's no doubt that the amount of people experiencing high amounts of stress and anxiety has dramatically increased. Dealing with stress and anxiety was one of the main reasons why I, and many other people, started practicing mindfulness



meditation. “I’ve always been someone who’s struggled with stress and snapping at people when I’m stressed,” said Pearce. “Especially right now, quarantine is so difficult, the racial injustice in our world is so difficult, the political environment, everything. It’s so easy to just get really angry. I think part of meditation for me has been, instead of just being angry at someone, really stopping and thinking, ‘I wonder why they feel that way.’ Especially when it’s someone responding with something really hateful, that has really helped me.”

The reason mindfulness meditation can help you when it comes to controlling your reaction is because it forces you to be present in the moment and think about what you’re going to do before you do it. “It takes you out of a reactionary state of mind,” said Silas Twickler (‘21). “You can often say things that you don’t mean and when you just purely react to something you can get angry but if you take a minute to process it, it takes a lot of that out of the equation and allows the situation to run more smoothly.”

Mindfulness meditation started out, and continues to be one of the coping mechanisms I use to help me deal with whatever is going on in my life, such as the stress I experience from school or the more serious medical issues I deal with. But more than that, it has also become about allowing myself to take a step back, focus on something as simple as my breath, and have a few moments of silence to myself before beginning or ending my day. John Kell

studies, Benson and Klipper demonstrated that humans have the capacity to intentionally induce a state of relaxation or calm that assists the body in healing and rejuvenation.”

Helping the body in healing and rejuvenation is exactly what MBSR is known for. “Not only does [MBSR] help with stress, it helps with pain reduction,” said Pearce. “They’ve found that people who have chronic pain have seen relief from that.” MBSR classes help students to focus their attention. While practicing mindfulness on your own is beneficial, it may be helpful to sign up for a class to begin your journey. You can sign up for a class by contacting Moyer through her email: j.n.moyer@comcast.net.

An article titled “Mindfulness meditation-related pain relief: Evidence for unique brain mechanisms in the regulation of pain” by NCBI, which focused on mindfulness meditation in regards to pain reduction, references MBSR and the work done by Zinn. “In the early 1980s, clinical studies of mindfulness began with Jon Kabat-Zinn’s seminal work with chronic pain patients. It was hypothesized that training in mindfulness would attenuate pain by altering emotional responses to pain and enhancing acceptance-related coping strategies. Over the course of a five year study, it was found that chronic pain patients who completed an eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program significantly improved their pain symptoms and overall quality of life, even up to four years after completion of this initial training. In other work, eight weeks of mindfulness training was shown to

“I don’t do it because I love meditating, because some days it’s so frustrating. I do it because I felt the difference in myself.”

(‘21) has a similar reason for practicing meditation saying, “I find it really helps me unwind after a long day.”

Mindfulness meditation looks different for everyone. The time, location, and method of mindfulness meditation varies from person to person. “For me, it’s not really about meditating. It’s more about getting into a meditative state,” said Twickler. “When I’m climbing and skating, I try and do something small beforehand so I’m in a more calm state of mind.”

Twickler described how he uses mindfulness when climbing. “With the highest climb I’ve done yet I knew I needed to be completely calm and focus on the moment. Before I started climbing I took three deep breaths until I felt calm, and then I started climbing,” said Twickler. “Before that day I had only done half the run so once I got halfway there, I paused briefly and collected myself as I looked up towards the top. Then I continued to climb and only focused on the rock and my moves. This helped a lot because when I was up there I didn’t have a single thought about messing up or falling.”

According to the article, “An Update on Mindfulness Meditation as a Self-help Treatment for Anxiety and Depression” by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), “meditation involves the intentional and repeated practice of intentionally activating the body’s relaxation response and has shown potential to improve one’s ability to manage stress, which has been shown to underlie various physical and psychological illnesses. In early

improve pain acceptance in lower back pain patients... It was noted that participation in the MBSR program reduced avoidance of pain-related threat words when compared to FM patients without meditation training.”

As someone who suffers from chronic back pain due to an accident in 2016, Pearce has insight into how meditation helps people cope with physical pain. “I think it has in that I understand now that pain is unavoidable, suffering is optional. You might experience physical pain, but the response you have to the physical pain is where the suffering comes in,” said Pearce. “If you’re constantly checking in on your body and are aware of things, once in a while you’re like, ‘oh my pain isn’t bad right now.’”

Helping me cope with physical pain is another one of the main reasons I started meditating. While mindfulness meditation can’t make the pain disappear, what it can do is teach you how to breathe through it, and as Pearce said, change your mindset so that you’re not suffering through pain, just experiencing it. I’ve had to cope with the fact that the pain I experience on a daily basis, due to an incurable condition, may never go away. Dealing with this is hard, and sometimes it gets the best of me. But spending time meditating has been what’s kept me sane and helped me to appreciate all the way in which I am fortunate instead of focusing on all the ways I am not.

Over the past six years I’ve been on my fair share of medication to help me through that pain. Some of the side effects have been

pretty brutal, the worst being the depression and irritability. Once I started mindfulness meditation I found that I was able to avoid getting irritated as easily because I started thinking about my response instead of immediately reacting.

While mindfulness meditation is known more for helping people with stress, anxiety, pain, and depression, it has also been proven to help with bias. “Racial bias, gender bias, whatever. Your meditation practice trains you to notice the reaction that you’re having to something and pause before you do something about it,” said Pearce. “That helps with bias.”

According to an article titled “Three Ways Mindfulness Can Make You Less Bias” by Greater Good Magazine, “one study

For Pearce the hardest part about meditating is “just continuing to make it a daily habit. It’s so easy to have your day get away from you and be like, ‘oh I’ll do it tomorrow.’ Making the time is the hardest.”

Continuing mindfulness meditation can be as difficult as getting started. But what should you do when getting through one five minute session is a challenge? “It definitely helps to follow along with a guided meditation. There’s some good ones on YouTube,” said Kell. “It really helps you get the process started.”

Twickler added in his advice on what to do when you’re having trouble staying present. “Until you get to a certain point, it’s pretty easy to get distracted,” said Twickler. “When I get distracted I

“Meditation isn’t about becoming a different person, a new person, or even a better person. It’s about training in awareness and getting a healthy sense of perspective. You’re not trying to turn off your thoughts or feelings. You’re learning to observe them without judgment. And eventually, you may start to better understand them as well.”

found that a brief loving-kindness meditation reduced prejudice toward homeless people, while another found that a brief mindfulness training decreased unconscious bias against black people and elderly people. In a third study by Adam Lueke and colleagues, white participants who received a brief mindfulness training demonstrated less biased behavior (not just attitudes) toward black participants in a trust game.”

The second study listed in the previously mentioned article by *Greater Good Magazine* is by Central Michigan University, who found wrote that “recent research has demonstrated that mindfulness meditation reduces implicit race and age bias by weakening the associations of the target group with negative constructs. The current research examined the potential for mindfulness to also affect discriminatory behavior. Participants listened to either a 10-min mindfulness audio or a control audio before playing a game in which they interacted with partners of different races in a simulation and decided how much they trusted them with their money. Results indicated that the mindfulness condition exhibited significantly less discrimination in the Trust Game than did either of the 2 control conditions.”

Throughout my years of meditation, I’ve meditated for as short as three minutes and as long as an hour. I’ve found that even though longer periods of meditation are generally more challenging to get through, some days three minutes can seem like an eternity. On those days it’s important to not push yourself too hard and understand that your brain will be less cooperative and you won’t be able to meditate for as long as you may usually. That’s okay.

For the times when your brain isn’t cooperating and your thoughts seem to have a mind of their own, Pearce has a technique that she uses. “There’s a great meditation on the Ten Percent Happier app. It’s called Welcome to the Party. Just imagine that your brain is a party, and your job is to greet people and welcome them to the party, but you don’t have to stand there and talk to them all night. Just welcome them to the party and then go back to what you were doing,” said Pearce. “When I find myself really frustrated and I just can’t stop thinking, I go to welcome to the party.”

focus on my breath and that helps me bring my attention back.”

Before you get started it’s important to note that meditation is not just relaxation. Pearce described it perfectly when she said, “meditation is jogging for the brain. It’s a way to help your mind work better. You don’t have to om and you don’t have to do a mantra. You just focus on one thing and whenever your mind wanders you focus and go back to that one thing. It’s like teaching a dog to walk next to you off leash.”

Besides understanding what the purpose of mindfulness meditation is before you begin, there are other ways that you can make the process easier for yourself. “Designate a space to meditate. That space will then become associated with that state of mind,” said Twickler. “If you say you’re going to meditate one day make sure you follow through with it because it will improve your mental strength.”

Whether you begin mindfulness meditation to help you deal with stress, anxiety, sadness or depression, physical or emotional pain, or just to gain a new perspective, incorporating it into your life will benefit you.

According to Headspace, “meditation isn’t about becoming a different person, a new person, or even a better person. It’s about training in awareness and getting a healthy sense of perspective. You’re not trying to turn off your thoughts or feelings. You’re learning to observe them without judgment. And eventually, you may start to better understand them as well.”

“I have seen so many people benefit by learning and using mindfulness skills,” said Moyer. “Even now - or especially now, in these COVID-19 times - so many people who have taken my classes say how grateful they are to have and use their mindfulness practices to get them through the challenges. The skills and practices help us navigate through difficult times with more ease and less suffering...and that gives us the inner reserves to help others who are perhaps struggling and not thriving.” **M**

- Isabella Crocco
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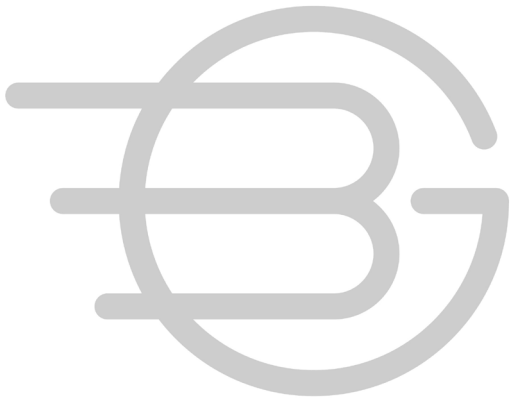
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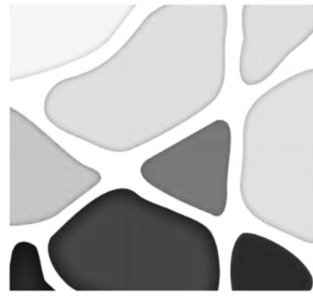
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